398.2
A378

7607

LIBRARY
College of St. Francis
JOLIET, ILL.

University of St. Francis
GEN 398.2 A378
Malory
Women of the Morte Darthur
3 0301 00018852 0

This book may be kept

FOURTEEN DAYS

A fine will be charged for each day the book is kept overtime.

DE 20 '68
DE 14 '67
MR 6 '69
DEC 16 '69
DEC 2 '76
DEC 13 '76

GAYLORD 142

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

Women of The Morte Darthur

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/womenofmortedart0000vari

THEREWITH HE SPURRED HIS HORSE STRAIGHT TO THE SYCAMORE TREE AND BLEW SO THE HORN EAGERLY THAT ALL THE SIEGE AND THE CASTLE RANG THEREOF

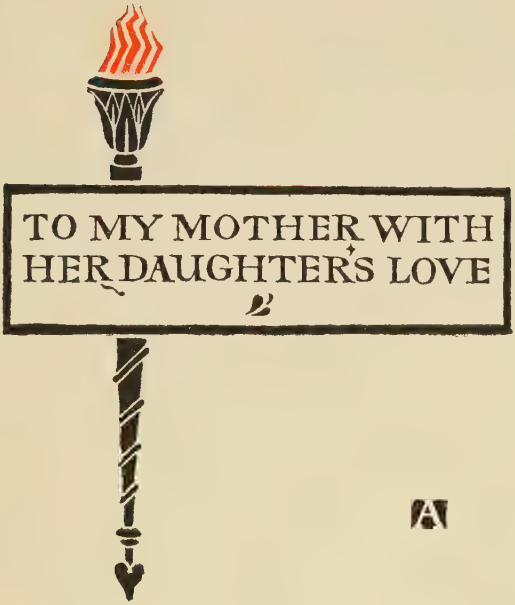
Women Of The Morte Darthur

TWELVE OF THE MOST ROMANTIC OF THE WORLDS LOVE STORIES SELECTED FROM MALORYS MORTE DARTHUR AND ILLUSTRATED BY ANN·D·ALEXANDER

METHUEN & CO LTD
36 ESSEX STREET W. C.
LONDON

This Edition First Published in 1927

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN



7607

FOREWORD

THIS selection of stories from our national epic will please all those who are interested in great lovers. All the notable lovers of the *Morte d'Arthur*, except Isoud la Blanche Mains, are here, and enact within these pages scenes from some of the most beautiful and compelling of the world's love-stories.

Many types of femininity are represented, from the light woman to the saint, but the good predominate; for the *Morte d'Arthur* folks are true children of the Age of Faith, and with very few exceptions, struggle heroically to follow in the footsteps of the Knight of Bethlehem. 'Doo after the good and leue the euyl,'

says Wyllyam Caxton, the book's first publisher, philosophically, 'and it shal brynge you to good fame and renommee in thys lyf.'

Any foreword to any selection from Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* that failed to pay a tribute to 'Syr Thomas Maleore, knyght,' would be incomplete. One has only to struggle through some of the good knight's sources to understand how much the stories gained in beauty and nobility in passing through the brain of the last of the romancers, whose claim to be 'the seruaunt of Jesu bothe day and nyght' we can well believe.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I. THE FAIR IGRAINE 1

How Uther Pendragon, king of all England in those days, loved fair Igraine, the duke's wife of Tintagil.

How by the means of Merlin he won her, and of the birth of their son Arthur.

II. THE DAMOSEL OF THE LAKE 10

How she came to the court on King Arthur's wedding day.

How an armed knight took her away by force and of her rescue by King Pellinore.

How Merlin was assotted and doted on this lady, and how she used him.

How the Damosel of the Lake wedded Sir Pelleas the Lover, and they loved together during their life days.

III. THE THREE ELAINES 24

(1) *The Queen of Benwick*: How she made great sorrow for the mortal war that King Claudas made upon her lord, and how Merlin foretold that her young son, Launcelot, should be in his time the best knight of the world.

(2) *King Pelles' Daughter*: How Sir Launcelot du Lake rescued her from her great pains, and of the birth of their son Galahad.

How Sir Bors came to Dame Elaine and saw Galahad, and how he was fed of the Sangreal.

How Dame Elaine, Galahad's mother, came in great estate to Camelot, and how she was commanded by Queen Guenever to avoid the court, and how Sir Launcelot became mad.

What sorrow Queen Guenever made for Sir Launcelot, and how he was sought by knights of his kin.

How Sir Launcelot was rescued by Dame Elaine, and after healed by the Sangreal.

How Sir Launcelot and Dame Elaine came to the Joyous Isle, and there he named himself Le Chevaler Mal Fet.

How Sir Launcelot returned to the court, and of the death of Dame Elaine.

CHAPTER PAGE

(3) *The Fair Maid of Astolat:* How Sir Launcelot du Lake wore her token at a tourney.

How Sir Launcelot was hurt and how he was brought to a hermitage to be healed.

How the maiden Elaine rode to seek Sir Launcelot and did attendance upon him.

Of the great lamentation of the Fair Maid of Astolat when Sir Launcelot should depart, and how she died for his love.

How the corpse of the Maid of Astolat arrived to-fore King Arthur, and of the burying, and how Sir Launcelot offered the mass penny.

IV. LINET AND DAME LIONESSE 76

How the damosel Linet came to Carlion and desired a knight to fight for a lady, and how Beaumains desired the battle.

How Beaumains departed, and how he gat of Sir Kay a spear and a shield, and how he jousted with Sir Launcelot, and of him was dubbed knight.

How the damosel rebuked Sir Beaumains, and ever he suffered it patiently.

How Beaumains slew two knights at a passage, and fought with the Knight of the Black Launds.

How the brother of the Black Knight met with Beaumains, and how Beaumains overcame him.

How the damosel ever rebuked Beaumains, and would not suffer him to sit at her table, but called him kitchen boy.

How the damosel suffered a change of heart, and how Beaumains overcame Sir Persant of Inde.

How the damosel and Beaumains came to the siege, and there Beaumains blew a horn, and then the Knight of the Red Launds came to fight with him.

How after long fighting Beaumains overcame the knight, and made him yield him to the lady of the castle.

How Sir Gareth, otherwise called Beaumains, came to the presence of his lady, and how they took acquaintance and of their love.

How the Queen of Orkney came to King Arthur's court, and how Sir Gawaine and his brethren kneeled to ask her blessing.

CHAPTER PAGE

How King Arthur sent for Dame Lionesse, and of the tourney held at her castle.

Of the wedding of Dame Lionesse and Sir Gareth of Orkney.

V. COLOMBE 113

How her love, Sir Lanceor of Ireland, was slain by Balin le Savage, and how she slew herself with Sir Lanceor's sword when she found him dead.

VI. TWO QUEENS OF LIONES 119

(1) *Elizabeth of Cornwall :* Of the true love between her and her husband, King Meliodas of Liones, and how she died of the birth of her son Tristram.

(2) *King Howell's daughter of Brittany :* How she would have poisoned her stepson Tristram, and how he forgave her and saved her life.

VII. LA BEALE ISOUD 125

How she came with Sir Tristram into England, and how Sir Launcelot brought them to Joyous Gard.

How by the counsel of La Beale Isoud Sir Tristram rode armed, and met with Sir Dinadan, Sir Gareth, and Sir Palomides, and how they approached the castle Lonazep, and spoke of the death of Sir Lamorak de Galis.

How Sir Tristram with La Beale Isoud and his fellowship came to the tournament of Lonazep, and of the noble feats they did in that tourney.

How Palomides slew Launcelot's horse, and how Sir Launcelot said to him, and how the prize of that day was given to Sir Palomides.

How King Arthur and Sir Launcelot came to see La Beale Isoud, and how Palomides smote down King Arthur, and of the second day of the tournament and of the treason of Sir Palomides to Sir Tristram.

How Sir Tristram departed with La Beale Isoud, and how Sir Palomides excused him, and how King Arthur and Sir Launcelot came into their pavilions as they sat at supper.

How Sir Tristram turned on the third day to King Arthur's party, and Sir Palomides would not.

How Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud departed with

CHAPTER PAGE

their fellowship, and how Sir Bleoberis and Sir Ector de Maris reported to Queen Guenever of the beauty of La Beale Isoud.

VIII. ALICE LA BEALE PILGRIM 156

How she cast her love unto Sir Alisander le Orphelin when she saw him joust, and how he choose her for his sovereign lady.

IX. NAMELESS WOMEN 162

How at the virgil of the feast of Pentecost a damosel desired Sir Launcelot to come and dub a knight.

How twelve nuns brought with them Galahad and prayed Sir Launcelot to make him knight.

How an old man brought in Galahad and set him in the Siege Perilous.

How a damosel announced to King Arthur that the Sangreal should appear in his house, and how King Arthur had all his knights together for a tourney or they departed.

How the Sangreal appeared, and how all the knights took upon them the quest, and of the sorrow of the king and queen at their departing.

X. SIR PERCIVALE'S SISTER 174

How she rode with Sir Galahad in the quest of the Sangreal and came to a ship wherein were Sir Bors and Sir Percivale.

How Sir Percivale's sister with the three fellows entered into a ship, and of a fair bed therein, and of a sword, and of how King Pelles had been maimed for drawing it.

How Galahad gripped the sword, and of the custom of a castle, and how Sir Percivale's sister bled a dish full of blood for to heal a lady, wherefore she died; and how her body was put in a ship.

How Sir Launcelot entered into the ship where Sir Percivale's sister lay, and how he met with his son, Galahad.

How Galahad came to King Mordrains, and how Sir Bors and Sir Percivale met with him again, and how they came to the castle of Corbin.

How Galahad and his fellows were fed of the Holy Sangreal, and how Our Lord appeared to them, and how

CHAPTER PAGE

they departed and took ship, and came to the city of Sarras, and found there the ship with the body of Sir Percivale's sister.

How they buried her, and were put in prison by the king of the city.

How they were fed of the Sangreal, and how Galahad was made king, and how Galahad and Percivale died and were buried with Sir Percivale's sister in the spiritualities.

XI. SIR URRE'S MOTHER 193

How she brought her son into Arthur's court to be healed of his wounds by the best knight of the word, and how Sir Launcelot du Lake healed him.

XII. GUENEVER 199

Of the month of May and of true lovers, and in especial of the true love betwixt Queen Guenever and Sir Launcelot du Lake.

How Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred disclosed their love to King Arthur, and how the king gave them licence to take him.

How Sir Launcelot was espied in the queen's chamber, and how Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred came with twelve knights to slay him.

Of the counsel and advice that was taken by Sir Launcelot and his friends for to save the queen.

How Sir Launcelot and his kinsmen rescued the queen from the fire, and how he slew many knights, and of the sorrow of King Arthur.

How King Arthur at the request of Sir Gawaine concluded to make war against Sir Launcelot, and laid siege to his castle called Joyous Gard.

How the Pope sent down his bulls to make peace, and how Sir Launcelot brought the queen to King Arthur.

How Sir Launcelot departed from the king and from Joyous Gard over seaward, and how King Arthur and Sir Gawaine with a great host made war on Sir Launcelot.

How Sir Mordred took on him to be king of England, and how King Arthur returned to Dover, and of the battle there, and how Sir Gawaine was slain.

How Sir Launcelot came with a great host to rescue King

Arthur, and how the men of Dover told him how that King Arthur was slain.

How Sir Launcelot sought all England endlong and overthwart and found Queen Guenever at Almesbury, and how Sir Launcelot took the habit on him as a hermit

How Sir Launcelot went with his eight fellows to Almesbury, and found there Queen Guenever dead, whom they brought to Glastonbury, and there buried beside her lord, and of the death of Sir Launcelot.

GLOSSARY 249

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

IN COLOUR

HOW SIR GARETH BLEW THE HORN (PAGE 97) *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

HOW SIR BORS FOUND GALAHAD 32

HOW TWELVE NUNS BROUGHT WITH THEM GALAHAD 164

HOW SIR LAUNCELOT AND HIS SON PARTED . . 184

IN BLACK AND WHITE

PAGE

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS 1

ARMS OF UTHER AND IGRAINE 9

MIMUE AND SIR PELLEAS 10

SEAL OF THE DAMOSEL OF THE LAKE . . . 23

THE JOYOUS ISLE 24

ARMS OF THE THREE ELAINES 75

SIR GARETH AND DAME LIONESSE 76

SEAL OF DAME LIONESSE 112

SIR BALIN AT THE TOMB 113

ARMS OF COLOMBE 118

PAGE

KING MELIODAS AND HIS QUEEN 119

ARMS OF THE TWO QUEENS OF LIONES . . . 124

TRISTRAM AND ISOUD COME INTO ENGLAND . . 125

SEAL OF LA BEALE ISOUD 155

SIR ALISANDER AND ALICE LA BEALE PILGRIM . . 156

SEAL OF LA BEALE ALICE 161

A DAMOSEL WARNS SIR LAUNCELOT 162

DECORATIVE LOZENGE 173

GALAHAD AND SIR PERCIVALE'S SISTER . . . 174

ARMS OF GALAHAD AND SIR PERCIVALE'S SISTER . 192

SIR LAUNCELOT AND SIR URRE 193

ARMS OF SIR URRE'S MOTHER 198

LAUNCELOT AND GUENEVER 199

THEY RODE ALL NIGHT TO THEIR OWN CASTLE

I

THE FAIR IGRAINE

She was called a fair lady, and a passynge wyse

IT befell in the days of Uther Pendragon, when he was king of all England, and so reigned, that there was a mighty duke in Cornwall that held war against him long time. And the duke was called the Duke of Tintagil. And so by means King Uther sent for this duke, charging him to bring his wife with him, for she was called a fair lady, and a passing wise, and her name was called Igraine.

So when the duke and his wife were come unto the king, by the means of great lords they were accorded

7607

both. The king liked and loved this lady well, and he made them great cheer out of measure, and desired to have had her love. But she was a passing good woman, and would not assent unto the king. And then she told the duke her husband, and said, I suppose we were sent for that I should be dishonoured; wherefore, husband, I counsel you, that we depart from hence suddenly, that we may ride all night to our own castle. And in like wise as she said so they departed. All so soon as King Uther knew of their departing so suddenly, he was wonderly wroth. Then he called to him his privy council, and told them of the sudden departing of the duke and his wife.

Then they advised the king to send for the duke and his wife by a great charge; and if he will not come at your summons, then have ye cause to make mighty war upon him. So that was done, and the messengers had their answers; and that was this shortly, that neither he nor his wife would not come at him.

Then was the king wonderly wroth. And then the king sent him plain word, and bade him be ready, for within forty days he would fetch him out of the biggest castle that he had.

Anon the duke furnished and garnished two strong castles of his, the one hight Tintagil, and the other hight Terrabil. So his wife Dame Igraine he put in the castle of Tintagil and himself he put in the castle of Terrabil. Then in all haste came Uther with a great host, and laid a siege about the castle of Terrabil. Then for pure anger and for great love of fair Igraine the king Uther fell sick. And as he lay in his pavilion

he was ware where the wizard Merlin stood at the porch of the pavilion door. Sir, said Merlin, I know all your heart every deal; so ye will be sworn unto me, as ye be a true king anointed, to fulfil my desire, ye shall have your desire. Then the king was sworn upon the Four Evangelists. Sir, said Merlin, this is my desire: after that ye shall win Igraine, ye shall have a child by her, and when that is born, that it shall be delivered to me for to nourish thereas I will have it; for it shall be your worship, and the child's avail, as mickle as the child is worth. I will well, said the king, as thou wilt have it. Now make you ready, said Merlin, this night ye shall be with fair Igraine in the castle of Tintagil; and ye shall be like the duke her husband, Ulfus, your knight shall be like Sir Brastias a knight of the duke's, and I will be like a knight that hight Jordanus, a knight of the duke's. So this was done as they devised. But the duke of Tintagil espied how the king rode from the siege of Terrabil, and therefore that night he issued out of the castle at a postern for to have distressed the king's host. And so, through his own issue, the duke himself was slain or ever the king came at the castle of Tintagil.

So after the death of the duke, more than three hours King Uther came to Tintagil. And there Igraine received him with joy, and that night he held her in his arms for she thought he was her own husband, and on day came Merlin to the king, and bade him make him ready, and so he kissed the lady Igraine, and departed in all haste. But when the lady heard tell of the duke her husband, and by all record he was dead or ever King Uther came to her, then she marvelled

who that might be that came to her in likeness of her lord; so she mourned privily and held her peace. Then all the barons by one assent prayed the king of accord betwixt the lady Igraine and him; and the king gave them leave, for fain would he have been accorded with her. So the king put all the trust in Ulfus to entreat between them, so by the entreaty at the last the king and she met together. Now will we do well, said Ulfus, our king is a lusty knight and wifeless, and my lady Igraine is a passing fair lady; it were great joy unto us all, and it might please the king to make her his queen. And anon, like a lusty knight, he assented thereto with good will, and so in all haste they were married in a morn with great mirth and joy.

So it befell after within half a year, as King Uther was with his queen, he asked her, by the faith she owed to him, whose was the child that should be born; then was she sore abashed to give answer. Dismay you not, said the king, but tell me the truth, and I shall love you the better, by the faith of my body. Sir, said she, I shall tell you the truth. The same night that my lord was dead, the hour of his death, as his knights record, there came into my castle of Tintagil a man like my lord in speech and in countenance, and two knights with him in likeness of his two knights Brastias and Jordanus, and so I welcomed him as I ought to welcome my lord, and the same night as I shall answer unto God, this child was begotten. That is truth, said the king, as ye say; for it was I myself that came in the likeness, and therefore dismay ye not, for I am father of the child; and there he told her all the cause, how it was by Merlin's

counsel. Then the queen made great joy when she knew who was the father of her child.

Soon came Merlin unto the king, and said, Sir, ye must purvey you for the nourishing of your child. As thou wilt, said the king, be it. Well, said Merlin, I know a lord of yours in this land, that is a passing true man and a faithful, and he shall have the nourishing of your child, and his name is Sir Ector. Let him be sent for, for to come and speak with you, and desire him yourself, as he loveth you, that he will put his own child to nourishing, and that his wife nourish yours. And when the child is born let it be delivered to me at yonder privy postern, unchristened. So like as Merlin devised it was done. And when the lady was delivered, the king commanded two knights and two ladies to take the child, bound in a cloth of gold, and that ye deliver him to what poor man ye meet at the postern gate of the castle. So the child was delivered unto Merlin, and so he bare it forth unto Sir Ector, and made an holy man to christen him, and named him Arthur.

Then within two years King Uther fell sick of a great malady. And in the meanwhile his enemies usurped upon him. Sir, said Merlin, ye may not lie so as ye do, for ye must to the field though ye ride on an horse-litter. So it was done as Merlin devised, and they carried the king forth in an horse-litter. And at St. Albans there met with the king a great host of the North. And that day King Uther's men overcame the Northern battle and slew many people, and put the remnant to flight. And then the king returned unto London and made great joy of his victory. And then

he fell passing sore sick, so that three days and three nights he was speechless. Then all the barons with Merlin came to-fore the king; then Merlin said aloud unto King Uther, Sir, shall your son Arthur be king after your days, of this realm with all appurtenance? Then Uther Pendragon turned him, and said in hearing of them all, I give him God's blessing and mine, and bid him pray for my soul, and righteously and worshipfully that he claim the crown upon forfeiture of my blessing; and therewith he yielded up the ghost. Wherefore the queen, fair Igraine, made great sorrow and all the barons.

Then stood the realm in great jeopardy long while, for every lord that was mighty of men made him strong, and many weened to have been king. But at last by the mean of Merlin young Arthur came into his own. For Merlin made by his means on Christmas day, in the churchyard of the greatest church in London, a great stone four square, like unto a marble stone; and in midst thereof was like an anvil of steel a foot on high, and therein stuck a fair sword naked by the point, and letters there were written in gold about the sword that said:—Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone and anvil, is rightwise king born of all England. Then the people marvelled, and told it to the Archbishop. So when all masses were done all the lords went to behold the stone and the sword. And when they saw the scripture some assayed, such as would have been king. But none might stir the sword nor move it. He is not here, said the Archbishop, that shall achieve the sword, but doubt not God will make

him known. And there was made a cry, that every man should assay that would, for to win the sword.

And at the feast of Pentecost all manner of men assayed to pull at the sword; but none might prevail but Arthur, and pulled it out afore all the lords and commons that were there, wherefore all the commons cried at once, We will have Arthur unto our king, for we all see that it is God's will that he shall be our king. And therewithal they all kneeled at once to Arthur, both rich and poor. And Arthur took the sword between both his hands, and offered it upon the altar where the Archbishop was, and so was he made knight of the best man that was there. And so anon was the coronation made. And there was he sworn unto his lords and the commons for to be a true king, to stand with true justice from henceforth the days of this life.

But many kings and barons were displeased, and asked Merlin, For what cause is that boy Arthur made your king? Sirs, said Merlin, I shall tell you the cause, for he is King Uther Pendragon's son, born in wedlock of Igraine, the duke's wife of Tintagil. Then is he a bastard, they said all. Nay, said Merlin, after the death of the duke, more than three hours, was Arthur begotten, and thirteen days after King Uther wedded fair Igraine. And who saith nay, he shall be king and overcome all his enemies; and, or he die, he shall be long king of all England. Some of the kings deemed well that it should be as Merlin said; but some of them laughed him to scorn. And these made great war upon King Arthur, but by great prowess he overcame them all, and so reigned king of all England.

And anon the king asked Sir Ector and Sir Ulfus how he was begotten, and they told him Uther Pendragon was his father and Queen Igraine his mother. Then he said to Merlin, I will that my mother be sent for, that I may speak with her; and if she say so herself then will I believe it. In all haste the Queen was sent for, and she came and brought with her Morgan le Fay, her daughter, Arthur's half sister, that was as fair a lady as any might be, and the king welcomed Igraine in the best manner.

Right so came Ulfus, and said openly, that the king and all might hear, Ye are the falsest lady of the world, and the most traitress unto the king's person. Beware, said Arthur, what thou sayest; thou speakest a great word. I am well ware, said Ulfus, what I speak, and here is my glove to prove it upon any man that will say the contrary, that this Queen Igraine is causer of your great damage, and of your great war. For, an she would have uttered it in the life of King Uther Pendragon, of the birth of you, and how ye were begotten, ye had never had the mortal war that ye have had; for the most part of your barons of your realm knew never whose son ye were, nor of whom ye were begotten, and she that bare you of her body should have made it known openly in excusing of her worship and yours, and in likewise to all the realm, wherefore I prove her false to God and to you and to all your realm, and who will say the contrary I will prove it on his body.

Than spake fair Igraine and said, I am a woman and I may not fight, but rather than I should be dishonoured, there will some good man take my quarrel.

More, she said, Merlin knoweth well, and ye Sir Ulfus, how King Uther came to me in the castle of Tintagil in likeness of my dear lord, that was dead three hours tofore. And after the thirteenth day King Uther wedded me, and by his commandment when the child was born it was delivered unto Merlin, and nourished by him, and so I saw my child never after, nor wot not what is his name, for I knew him never yet. Well I wot, said the queen, I bare a child by my lord King Uther, but I wot not where he is become. Then Merlin took the king by the hand saying, This is your mother. And therewith Sir Ector bare witness how he nourished him by Uther's commandment. And therewith King Arthur took his mother, fair Igraine, in his arms and kissed her, and either wept upon other. And then the king let make a great feast that lasted eight days.

THEY LOVED TOGETHER DURING THEIR LIFE DAYS

II

THE DAMOSEL OF THE LAKE

Ever ſhe dyd grete goodens unto kynge Arthur / and to alle his knytes thrugh her ſorcery and enchauntementes /

SO it fell on a time King Arthur said unto Merlin, My barons will let me have no rest, but needs I must take a wife, and I will none take but by thy counsel and by thine advice. It is well done, said Merlin, that ye take a wife, for a man of your bounty and noblesse should not be without a wife. Now is there any that ye love more than another. Yea, said King Arthur, I love Guenever the king's daughter of the land of Cameliard, the which holdeth in his house

the Table Round that ye told me he had of my father Uther. And this damosel is the most valiant and the fairest lady that I know living, or yet that ever I could find. Sir, said Merlin, as of her beauty and fairness she is one of the fairest alive, but, an ye loved her not so well as ye do, I should find you a damosel of beauty and of goodness that should like you and please you, an your heart were not set; but there as a man's heart is set, he will be loath to return. That is truth, said King Arthur. But Merlin warned the king covertly that Guenever was not wholesome for him to take to wife, for he warned him that Launcelot should love her, and she him again; but even a wizard may not turn a lover from his love.

Then Merlin desired of the king for to have men with him that should enquire of Guenever, and Merlin went forth unto King Leodegrance of Cameliard, and told him of the desire of the king that he would have unto his wife Guenever his daughter. That is to me, said King Leodegrance the best tidings that ever I heard, that so worthy a king of prowess and noblesse will wed my daughter. And as for my lands, I will give him, wist I it might please him, but he hath lands enow, him needeth none; but I shall send him a gift shall please him much more, for I shall give him the Table Round, the which Uther Pendragon gave me, and when it is full complete there is an hundred knights and fifty. And as for an hundred good knights I have myself, but I faute fifty, for so many have been slain in my days. And so Leodegrance delivered his daughter Guenever unto Merlin, and the Table Round with the hundred

knights, and so they rode freshly, with great royalty, what by water and what by land, till that they came nigh unto London.

When King Arthur heard of the coming of Guenever and the hundred knights with the Table Round, then King Arthur made great joy for her coming, and that rich present, and said openly, This fair lady is passing welcome unto me, for I have loved her long. And these knights with the Round Table please me more than right great riches. And in all haste the king let ordain for the marriage and the coronation in the most honourable wise that could be devised. Now, Merlin, said King Arthur, go thou and espy me in all this land fifty knights which be of most prowess and worship. Then the Bishop of Canterbury was fetched, and he blessed the sieges with great royalty and devotion, and there were set the knights in their sieges. But two sieges were void, and the Siege Perilous. What is the cause, said King Arthur, that there be two places void in the sieges? Sir, said Merlin, there shall no man sit in these places but they shall be of most worship. But in the Siege Perilous there shall no man sit therein but one, and he that shall sit there shall have no fellow. Afterwards the two sieges were fulfilled by Sir Launcelot the good knight and Sir Percivale de Galis, and Sir Launcelot's son, Galahad sat in the Siege Perilous.

Then was the high feast made ready, and the king was wedded at Camelot unto Dame Guenever in the church of Saint Stephen's, with great solemnity. And as every man was set after his degree, Merlin bade that none of them remove. For ye shall see a strange and a

marvellous adventure. Right so as they sat there came running in a white hart into the hall, and a white brachet next him, and thirty couple of black running hounds came after with a great cry. The white brachet bit him by the buttock and pulled out a piece, wherethrough the hart leaped a great leap and overthrew a knight that sat at the boardside; and therewith the knight arose and took up the brachet, and so went forth out of the hall, and rode his way with the brachet. Right so anon came in a lady on a white palfrey, and cried aloud to King Arthur, Sir, suffer me not to have this despite, for the brachet was mine that the knight led away.

With this there came a knight riding all armed on a great horse, and took the lady away with him with force, and ever she cried and made great dole. When she was gone the king was glad, for she made such a noise. Nay, said Merlin, ye may not leave these adventures so lightly; for these adventures must be brought again or else it would be disworship to you and to your feast. I will, said the king, that all be done by your advice. Then, said Merlin, let call Sir Gawaine your nephew, for he must bring again the white hart. Also let call King Pellinore, for he must bring again the lady and the knight, or else slay him. Also, sir, ye must let call King Pellinore's son Sir Tor, for he must bring again the brachet and the knight, or else slay him. And all was done as Merlin said.

Then King Pellinore armed him and mounted upon his horse, and rode more than a pace after the lady that the knight led away. And as he rode in a forest, he saw in a valley a damosel sit by a well, and a wounded

knight in her arms. And when she was ware of him, she cried overloud, Help me knight; for Christ's sake, King Pellinore. And he would not tarry, he was so eager in his quest, and ever she cried an hundred times after help. When she saw he would not abide, she prayed unto God to send him as much need of help as she had, and that he might feel it or he died. So the knight there died that there was wounded, wherefore the lady for pure sorrow slew herself with his sword. As King Pellinore rode in that valley he met with a poor man, a labourer. Sawest thou not, said Pellinore, a knight riding and leading away a lady? Yea, said the man, I saw that knight, and the lady that made great dole; and yonder beneath in a valley there shall ye see two pavilions, and one of the knights of the pavilions challenged that lady of that knight, and said she was his cousin near, wherefore he should lead her no farther. And so they waged battle in that quarrel. And for this quarrel I left them fighting. And if ye will ride a pace ye shall find them fighting, and the lady was beleft with the two squires in the pavilions. God thank thee, said King Pellinore.

Then he rode a wallop till he had a sight of the two pavilions, and the two knights fighting. Anon he rode unto the pavilions, and saw the lady was his quest, and said, Fair lady, ye must go with me unto the court of King Arthur. Sir knight, said the two squires that were with her, yonder are two knights that fight for this fair lady, go thither and depart them, and be agreed with them, and then may ye have her at your pleasure. Ye say well, said King Pellinore. And anon he rode

betwixt them, and asked them the causes why that they fought? Sir knight, said the one, I shall tell you, this lady is my kinswoman nigh, mine aunt's daughter, and when I heard her complain that she was with him maugre her head, I waged battle to fight with him. Sir knight, said the other, whose name was Hontzlake of Wentland, and this lady I gat by my prowess of arms this day at Arthur's court. That is untruly said, said King Pellinore, for ye came in suddenly there as we were at the high feast, and took away this lady or any man might make him ready; and therefore it was my quest to bring her again and you both, or else the one of us to abide in the field, therefore the lady shall go with me, or I will die for it, for I have promised it King Arthur. And therefore fight ye no more, for none of you shall have no part in her as at this time; and if ye list to fight for her, fight with me, and I will defend her. Well, said the knights, make you ready. And as King Pellinore would have put his horse from them, Sir Hontzlake rove his horse through with a sword, and said: Now art thou on foot as well as we are. When King Pellinore espied that his horse was slain he said, Knight, keep well thy head, for thou shalt have a buffet for the slaying of my horse. So King Pellinore gave him such a stroke upon the helm that he fell to the earth dead. And when the other knight saw that buffet, he would not fight, but kneeled down and said, Take my cousin the lady with you at your request, and I require you as ye be a true knight, put her to no shame nor villainy. What, said King Pellinore, will ye not fight for her? No, sir, said the knight, I will not fight with such a knight of

prowess as ye be. Well, said Pellinore, I promise you she shall have no villainy by me, as I am a true knight; but now me lacketh an horse, but I will have Hontzlake's horse. Ye shall not need, said the knight, for I shall give you such an horse as shall please you, so that you will lodge with me, for it is near night. I will well, said King Pellinore, abide with you all night. And there he had with him right good cheer, and fared of the best with passing good wine, and had merry rest that night. And on the morn he heard a mass and dined; and then was brought him a fair bay courser, and King Pellinore's saddle set upon him. Now what shall I call you? said the knight, inasmuch as ye have my cousin at your desire of your quest. Sir, said he, my name is King Pellinore of the Isles, and knight of the Table Round. Now what is your name? I pray you tell me. Sir, my name is Sir Meliot of Logurs, and this lady my cousin hight Nimue, and the knight that was in the other pavilion is my sworn brother, a passing good knight, and his name is Brian of the Isles, and he is full loath to do wrong, and full loath to fight with any man, but if he be sore sought on. It is marvel, said Pellinore, that he will not have ado with me. Sir, he will not have ado with no man but if it be at his request. Bring him to the court, said Pellinore, one of these days. Sir, we will come to-gether. And ye shall be welcome, said Pellinore. Anon he departed and his lady, and rode towards Camelot; and as they came by the well thereas the wounded knight was and the lady, there he found them eaten with wild beasts, wherefore he made great sorrow, and wept passing sore, and said, Alas! her life

might I have saved; but I was so fierce in my quest, therefore I would not abide. Wherefore make ye such dole? said the lady. I wot not, said Pellinore, but my heart mourneth sore of the death of her, for she was a passing fair lady and a young, and much I cast my heart on her visage.

And herewith they departed, and so by noon they came to Camelot; and the king and queen were passing fain of his coming. And there he was sworn upon the Four Evangelists, to tell the truth of his quest. Ah, Sir Pellinore, said Queen Guenever, ye were greatly to blame that ye saved not this lady's life. Madam, said, Pellinore, ye were greatly to blame an ye would not save your own life an ye might, but, save your pleasure, I was so furious in my quest that I would not abide, and that repenteth me, and shall the days of my life. Truly, said Merlin, ye ought sore to repent it, for that lady was your own daughter by the lady of the Rule, and that knight was her love, and should have wedded her, and he was a right good knight of a young man, and to this court was he coming, and his name was Sir Miles of the Launds, and a false knight and a coward came behind him and slew him with a spear, and she for great sorrow and dole slew herself with his sword. And because ye would not abide and help her, ye shall see your best friend fail you when ye be in the greatest distress. And that penance God hath ordained you for that deed, that he that ye shall most trust to of any man alive, he shall leave you there ye shall be slain. Me forthinketh, said King Pellinore, that this shall me betide, but God may fordo well destiny.

So after the quests of the wedding feast were done and Sir Gawaine was come again with the white hart's head, and Sir Tor had brought the brachet, it fell that Merlin fell in a dotage on the damosel that King Pellinore brought to court. And Merlin would let her have no rest, but always he would be with her. And ever she made Merlin good cheer till she had learned of him all manner of thing that she desired; and he was assotted upon her, that he might not be from her.

And within a while the Damosel of the Lake departed, and Merlin went with her evermore wheresomever she went, and by the way Merlin showed her many wonders, and came into Cornwall. And she was ever passing weary of him, and fain would have been delivered of him, for she was afeard of him, and she could not beskift him by no mean. And so on a time it happed that Merlin showed to her in a rock whereas was a great wonder. So by her subtle working she made Merlin to go under that stone to let her wit of the marvels there; but she wrought so there for him that he came never out for all the craft he could do. And so she departed and left Merlin.

So it happened then that the Damosel of the Lake, Nimue, met in the forest with a knight that went on his foot making great dole, and so she asked him the cause. And so the woeful knight told her how his lord was betrayed through a knight and a lady, and how he will never arise out of his bed till he be dead. Who is your lord and what hight he, said Nimue. Ah, said the knight, he is the best knight I trow in the world and the most

man of prowess, and his name hight Sir Pelleas the Lover. And he loveth a great lady in this country and her name is Ettard. And so when he loved her there was cried in this country a great jousts three days, and all the knights of this country were there and gentlewomen, and who that proved him the best knight, should have a passing good sword and a circlet of gold, and the circlet the knight should give it to the fairest lady that was at the jousts. And this knight Sir Pelleas was the best knight, for there was never man that ever Sir Pelleas met withal but he struck him down. And every day of the three days he strake down twenty knights, therefore they gave him the prize, and forthwithal he went thereas the lady Ettard was, and gave her the circlet and said openly she was the fairest lady there was. And so he chose her for his soverain lady, and never to love other but her. But she was so proud she had scorn of him and said she would never love him though he should die for her. Wherefore all ladies and gentlewomen had scorn of her that she was so proud, for there were fairer than she, and there was none that was there but an Sir Pelleas would have proffered them love they would have loved him for his noble prowess. Then for long Sir Pelleas wooed the lady Ettard as a noble knight should and ever she did him great despite and fair word had he never of her, but whenever he came before her she rebuked him in the foulest manner. At last Sir Gawaine met with Sir Pelleas making great dole out of measure, and he asked him why he made such sorrow, and Sir Pelleas told Sir Gawaine all as it is to-fore rehearsed. Leave

your mourning, said Sir Gawaine, and I shall do all in my power to get you the love of your lady. And therewith Sir Gawaine plight his troth unto Sir Pelleas to be true and faithful unto him, and Sir Gawain departed, and came to the castle whereas stood the pavilions of this lady without the gate for it was then in the month of May. On the third day after, in the morning early, Sir Pelleas armed him, for he had never slept since Sir Gawaine departed from him for Sir Gawaine had promised him, by the faith of his body, to return to him within the space of a day and a night. Then Sir Pelleas mounted upon horseback, and came to the pavilions thereas they stood without the castle, and then he alighted and yede into one pavilion and there he saw Sir Gawaine with the lady Ettard in his arms. And when he saw that, his heart well nigh brast for sorrow. Alas, he said, that ever knight should be found so false. And he took his horse and might no longer abide for pure sorrow. And when he had ridden nigh half a mile he turned again and thought to slay them. So when Sir Pelleas came again to the pavilions, he tied his horse unto a tree, and pulled out his sword naked in his hand, and went to them thereas they lay. And when he saw them both so lie sleeping fast, he thought it were shame to slay them sleeping, and so laid the sword naked overthwart both their throats, and took his horse and rode his way.

And when he came to his pavilions he told his knights and his squires how he had sped, and said thus to them, For your true and good service ye have done me, I shall give you all my goods, for I will go unto my bed

and never arise until I am dead. And when I am dead, I charge you take the heart out of my body and bear it her betwixt two silver dishes, and tell her how I saw her there with the false Sir Gawaine. Right so Sir Pelleas unarmed him, and went unto his bed making marvellous dole and sorrow.

Bring me to your master, said the Damosel of the Lake, and I will warrant his life he shall not die of love. Anon that knight brought her unto him, and when she saw him lie in his bed, she thought she saw never so likely a knight; and therewith she threw an enchantment upon him, and he fell asleep. And therewhile she rode unto the Lady Ettard and charged no man to wake him till she came again. So within two hours she brought the Lady Ettard thither, and both ladies found him asleep: Lo, said the Damosel of the Lake, ye ought to be ashamed for to murder such a knight. And therewith she threw such an enchantment upon her that she loved him sore, that well nigh she was out of her mind. O Lord Jesu, said the Lady Ettard, how is it befallen unto me that I love now him that I have most hated of any man alive? It is the right wise judgment of God, said the damosel. And then anon Sir Pelleas awaked and looked upon Ettard; and when he saw her he knew her, and then he hated her more than any women alive, and said: Away traitress, come never in my sight. And when she heard him say so, she wept and made great sorrow out of measure.

Sir knight Pelleas, said the Damosel of the Lake, take your horse and come forth with me out of this

country and ye shall love a lady that shall love you. I will well, said Sir Pelleas, for this Lady Ettard hath done me great despite and shame, and there he told her the beginning and ending, and how he had purposed never to have arisen till that he had been dead. And now such grace God hath sent me, that I hate her as much as ever I loved her thanked be our Lord Jesu. Thank me, said the Damosel of the Lake. Anon Sir Pelleas armed him, and took his horse, and commanded his men to bring after his pavilions where the Damosel of the Lake would assign. So Sir Pelleas the Lover wedded the Damosel of the Lake and they loved together during their life days.

And against the feast of Pentecost came the Damosel of the Lake and brought with her Sir Pelleas to the court; and at the high feast there was great jousting of knights, and of all knights that were at that joust Sir Pelleas had the prize; for Sir Pelleas was so strong there might but few knights sit him a buffet with a spear. And at the next feast Sir Pelleas was made Knight of the Table Round and great joy had King Arthur of Sir Pelleas. But Pelleas loved never after Sir Gawaine, but as he spared him for the love of King Arthur; but ofttimes at jousts and tournaments Sir Pelleas quit Sir Gawaine, for so it rehearseth in the French book. And Sir Pelleas was a worshipful knight and was one of the four who enchieved the Sangreal, and the Damosel of the Lake made by her means that never he had ado with Sir Launcelot du Lake, for where Sir Launcelot was at any jousts, she would not suffer him to be there that day, but if it were on the side of

Sir Launcelot. And she would never suffer Sir Pelleas to be in no place where he should be in danger of his life and so he lived to the uttermost of his days with her in great rest.

III

THE THREE ELAINES

And there came afore him thre fayre laydes

The Queen of Benwick

SIR LAUNCELOT DU LAKE, flower of all King Arthur's noble knights, was beloved in turn by three women each bearing the name Elaine. Of the first, his mother, the *Morte d'Arthur* gives us only one glimpse. She holds the stage just long enough to utter the cri-de-coeur of all mothers.

So it befell, says the romancer, that Merlin went

over the sea into the land of Benwick, whereas King Ban was king, and there Merlin spake with King Ban's wife, a fair lady and a good, and her name was Elaine, and there he saw young Launcelot. There the queen made great sorrow for the mortal war that King Claudas made on her lord and on her lands. Take none heaviness, said Merlin, for this same child within this twenty year shall revenge you on King Claudas, that all Christendom shall speak of it; and this same child shall be the most man of worship of the world, and his first name is Galahad, that know I well, said Merlin, and since ye have confirmed him Launcelot. That is truth, said the queen, his first name was Galahad. O Merlin, said the queen, shall I live to see my son such a man of prowess? Yea, lady, on my peril ye shall see it, and live many winters after. And so Merlin departed.

King Pelles' Daughter

Twenty years after, when Launcelot had fulfilled Merlin's prophecy and become the best knight of the word, the book records that he passed over the pont of Corbin, riding on his adventure and there he saw the fairest tower that ever he saw, and there under a fair town full of people; and all the people, men and women cried at once: Welcome, Sir Launcelot du Lake, the flower of all knighthood, for by thee all we shall be holpen out of danger. What mean ye, said Sir Launcelot, that ye cry so upon me? Ah, fair knight, said they all, here is within this tower a dolorous lady that hath been here in pain many winters and days, for ever she boileth

7607

in scalding water; and but late, said all the people, Sir Gawaine was here and he might not help her, and so he left her in pain. So may I, said Sir Launcelot, leave her in pain as well as Sir Gawaine did. Nay, said the people, we know well that it is Sir Launcelot that shall deliver her. Well, said Launcelot, then shew me what I shall do.

Then they brought Sir Launcelot into the tower; and when he came to the chamber thereas this lady was, the doors of iron unlocked and unbolted. And so Sir Launcelot went into the chamber that was as hot as any stew. And there Sir Launcelot took the fairest lady by the hand that ever he saw, and she was naked as a needle; and by enchantment Queen Morgan le Fay and the Queen of Northgalis had put her there in that pains, because she was called the fairest lady of that country; and there she had been five years, and never might she be delivered of her great pains unto the time the best knight of the world had taken her by the hand. Then the people brought her clothes. And when she was arrayed, Sir Launcelot thought she was the fairest lady of the world, but if it were Queen Guenever.

Then this lady said to Sir Launcelot: Sir, if it please you will go with me hereby into a chapel that we may give loving and thanking unto God? Madam, said Sir Launcelot, come on with me, I will go with you. So when they came there and gave thankings to God all the people, both learned and lewd, gave thankings unto God and him, and said: Sir knight, since ye have delivered this lady, ye shall deliver us from a serpent there is here in a tomb. Then Sir Launcelot took his

shield and said: Bring me thither, and what I may do unto the pleasure of God and you I will do. So when Sir Launcelot came thither he saw written upon the tomb letters of gold that said thus: Here shall come a leopard of king's blood, and he shall slay this serpent, and this leopard shall engender a lion in this foreign country, the which lion shall pass all other knights. So then Sir Launcelot lift up the tomb, and there came out a horrible and fiendly dragon, spitting fire out of his mouth. Then Sir Launcelot fought with the dragon long, and at the last with great pain Sir Launcelot slew that dragon. Therewithal came King Pelles, the good and noble knight, and saluted Sir Launcelot and he him again. Fair knight, said the king, what is your name? I require you of your knighthood tell me! Sir, said Launcelot, wit ye well my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake. And my name is, said the king, Pelles, king of the foreign country, and cousin nigh unto Joseph of Aramathie. Then either of them made much of other, and so they went into the castle to take their repast. And anon there came in a dove at a window, and in her mouth there seemed a little censer of gold. And therewithal there was such a savour as all the spicery of the world had been there. And forthwithal there was upon the table all manner of meats and drinks that they could think upon. So in came a damosel passing fair and young, and she bare a vessel of gold betwixt her hands; and thereto the king kneeled devoutly, and said his prayers, and so did all that were there. O Jesu, said Sir Launcelot, what may this mean? This is, said the king, the richest thing that any man hath living.

will forgive you this deed; and therewith he took her up in his arms, and kissed her, for she was as fair a lady, and thereto lusty and young, and as wise, as any was that time living. So God me help, said Sir Launcelot, I may not wite this to you; but her that made this enchantment upon me as between you and me, an I may find her, that same Lady Brisen, she shall lose her head for witchcrafts, for there was never knight so deceived so as I am this night. And so Sir Launcelot arrayed him, and armed him, and took his leave mildly at that young lady Elaine. Then she said: My lord Sir Launcelot, I beseech you see me as soon as ye may, for I have obeyed me unto the prophecy that my father told me. And by his commandment to fulfil this prophecy I have given the greatest riches and the fairest flower that ever I had, and that is my maidenhood that I shall never have again; and therefore, gentle knight, owe me your good will.

And so Sir Launcelot took his leave mildly at that young lady Elaine and so he departed, and rode till he came to the castle of Corbin, where her father was. And as fast as her time came she was delivered of a fair child, and they christened him Galahad because Sir Launcelot was so named at the fountain stone; and after the Lady of the Lake confirmed him Sir Launcelot du Lake.

Then after this lady was delivered and churched, there came a knight unto her, his name was Sir Bromel la Pleche, the which was a great lord; and he had loved that lady long, and he evermore desired her to wed her; and so by no mean she could put him off, till on

a day she said: Wilt thou well, sir knight, I will not love you, for my love is set on the best knight of the world. Who is he? said Sir Bromel. Sir, she said, it is Sir Launcelot du Lake that I love and none other, and therefore woo me no longer. Ye say well, said Sir Bromel, and sithen ye have told me so much, ye shall have but little joy of Sir Launcelot, for I shall slay him wheresomever I meet him. Sir, said the Lady Elaine, do him no treason. Wit ye well, my lady, said Bromel, and I promise you this twelvemonth I shall keep the pont of Corbin for Sir Launcelot's sake, that he shall neither come nor go unto you, but I shall meet with him.

Then as it fell by fortune and adventure, Sir Bors de Ganis, that was nephew unto Sir Launcelot, came over that bridge; and there Sir Bromel and Sir Bors jousted, and Sir Bors smote Sir Bromel such a buffet that he bare him over his horse's croup. Then Sir Bromel, as an hardy knight, pulled out his sword, and dressed his shield to do battle with Sir Bors. And then Sir Bors alighted, and there they dashed together many sad strokes; till at last Sir Bromel was laid to the earth. Then Sir Bromel cried Sir Bors mercy and yielded him. Upon this covenant thou shalt have thy life, said Sir Bors, so thou go unto Sir Launcelot and yield thee unto him as knight recreant. I will do it, said Sir Bromel, and that he sware on the cross of the sword. And so he let him depart, and Sir Bors rode unto King Pelles, that was within Corbin.

And when the king and Elaine his daughter wist that Sir Bors was nephew unto Sir Launcelot, they made

him great cheer. Then said Dame Elaine: We marv
where Sir Launcelot is, for he came never here bu
once. Marvel not, said Sir Bors, for this half yea
he hath been in prison with Queen Morgan le Fay, Kin
Arthur's sister. Alas, said Dame Elaine, that m
repenteth. And ever Sir Bors beheld that child in he
arms and ever him seemed it was passing like Sir Launcelo
Truly, said Elaine, wit ye well this is his child. The
Sir Bors wept for joy, and he prayed to God it migh
prove as good a knight as its father was. And so cam
in a white dove, and she bare a little censer of gold i
her mouth, and there was all manner of meats an
drinks; and a maiden bare that Sangreal, and she sai
openly: Wit you well, Sir Bors, that this child is Galahad
that shall sit in the Siege Perilous, and achieve th
Sangreal, and he shall be much better than ever wa
Sir Launcelot du Lake, that is his own father. An
then they kneeled down and made their devotion
and there was such a savour as all the spicery of th
world had been there. And when the dove took he
flight, the maiden vanished with the Sangreal as sh
came.

Sir, said Sir Bors, unto King Pelles, this castle ma
be named the Castle Adventurous, for here be man
strange adventures. That is sooth, said the king, fo
there come but few knights here that go away with an
worship. For I let you wit, here shall no knight wi
no worship but if he be of worship himself and of goo
living, and that loveth God, and else he getteth n
worship here, be he never so hardy. This is a wonderfu
thing, said Sir Bors. What mean ye in this country

THEN SIR BORS WEPT FOR JOY · AND HE PRAYED TO GOD IT MIGHT PROVE AS GOOD A KNIGHT AS HIS FATHER WAS:

wot not, for ye have many strange adventures, and therefore I will lie in this castle this night.

And so Sir Bors was led unto bed in a fair large chamber, and many doors were shut about the chamber. Anon withal there came an old man into the chamber, and he sat him down in a fair chair, and there seemed to be two adders about his neck; and then the old man had an harp, and there he sang an old song how Joseph of Aramathie came into this land and brought with him the Holy Sangreal. And then Sir Bors seemed there came the whitest dove with a little gold censer in her mouth. So was all that place full of good savours.

Then Sir Bors saw four children bearing four fair tapers, and an old man in the midst of the children with a censer in his own hand, and a spear in his other hand, and that spear was called the Spear of Vengeance.

Now, said that old man to Sir Bors, go ye to your cousin, Sir Launcelot, and tell him of this adventure the which had been most convenient for him of all earthly knights; but sin is so foul in him he may not achieve such holy deeds, for had not been his sin he had passed all the knights that ever were in his days; and tell thou Sir Launcelot, of all worldly adventures he passeth in manhood and prowess all other, but in this spiritual matter he shall have many his better. Then Sir Bors saw four gentlewomen come by him, purely beseen; and he saw where that they entered in to a chamber where was great light as it were a summer light, and the women kneeled down afore an altar of silver with four pillars, and as it had been a bishop kneeled

down afore that table of silver. And as Sir Bors looked over his head he saw a sword like silver, naked, hoving over his head, and the clearness thereof smote so in his eyes that as at that time Sir Bors was blind; and there he heard a voice that said: Go hence thou Sir Bors, for as yet thou art not worthy for to be in this place. And then he yede backwards to his bed till on the morn. And on the morn King Pelles made great joy of Sir Bors; and then he departed and rode to Camelot, and there he found Sir Launcelot du Lake, and told him of the adventures he had seen with King Pelles at Corbin.

So the noise sprang in Arthur's court that Launcelot had a son by Elaine, daughter of King Pelles, where fore Queen Guenever was wroth, and gave many rebukes to Sir Launcelot, and called him false knight. And Sir Launcelot told the queen all, and so the queen held Sir Launcelot excused. And as the book saith, King Arthur had been in France, and had made war upon the mighty King Claudas, and had won much of his lands. And when the king was come again he let cry a great feast, that all lords and ladies of all England should be there, but if it were such as were rebellious against him.

And when Dame Elaine, the daughter of King Pelles, heard of this feast she went to her father and required him that he would give her leave to ride to that feast. The king answered: I will well ye go thither, but in any wise as ye love me and will have my blessing, that ye be well beseen in the richest wise; and look that ye spare not for no cost. Then by the advice of Dame Brisen, her maiden, all thing was apparelled unto the

purpose, that there was never no lady more richlier beseen. So she rode with twenty knights and ten ladies and gentlewomen, to the number of an hundred horses. And when she came to Camelot King Arthur and Queen Guenever said, and all the knights, that Dame Elaine was the fairest and the best beseen lady that ever was seen in that court. And anon as King Arthur wist that she was come, he met her and saluted her, and so did the most part of all the knights of the Round Table. But when Sir Launcelot saw her he was so ashamed, and that because he drew his sword on her, that he would not salute her nor speak to her; and yet Sir Launcelot thought she was the fairest women that ever he saw in his life days.

But when Dame Elaine saw Sir Launcelot that would not speak unto her she was so heavy that she weened her heart would have to-brast; for wit ye well, out of measure she loved him. And then Elaine said to her woman, Dame Brisen: The unkindness of Sir Launcelot slayeth me near. Ah, peace, madam, said Dame Brisen, I will undertake that this night he shall be with you, an ye would hold you still. That were me liefer, said Dame Elaine, than all the gold that is above the earth. So when Elaine was brought unto Queen Guenever either made other good cheer by countenance, but nothing with hearts. But all men and women spake of the beauty of Dame Elaine, and of her great riches.

Then, at night, the queen commanded that Dame Elaine should sleep in a chamber nigh her chamber, and all under one roof. Then the queen sent for Sir Launcelot and bade him come to her that night: or

else I am sure, said the queen, that ye will go to your lady, Dame Elaine. Ah, madam, said Sir Launcelot, never say ye so, for that I did was against my will. Then, said the queen, look that ye come when I send for you. Madam, said Launcelot, I shall not fail you.

This bargain was soon done and made between them, but Dame Brisen knew it by her crafts, and told it to her lady, Elaine. Alas, said she, what shall I do? Let me deal, said Dame Brisen, for I shall bring him by the hand even to you, and he shall ween that I am Queen Guenever's messenger. Now well is me, said Elaine, for all the world I love not so much as I do Sir Launcelot.

So when time came that all folks were abed, Dame Brisen came to Sir Launcelot's bed's side and said: Sir Launcelot du Lake, sleep you? My lady, Queen Guenever awaiteth upon you. Oh my fair lady, said Sir Launcelot, I am ready to go with you where ye will have me. So Sir Launcelot threw upon him a long gown, and his sword in his hand; and then Dame Brisen took him by the finger and led him to her lady, Dame Elaine; and then she departed and left them together.

Now speak we of Queen Guenever that sent one of her women unto Sir Launcelot; and when she came there she found his bed cold, and he was away; so she came to the queen and told her all. Alas, said the queen, where is that false knight become! Then the queen was nigh out of her wit, and then she writhed and weltered like a mad woman, and at the last the queen met with Sir Launcelot; and thus she said: False

traitor knight that thou art, look thou never abide in my court, and not so hardy thou false traitor that thou art, that ever thou come in my sight. Alas, said Sir Launcelot; and therewith he took such an heartly sorrow at her words that he fell down to the floor in a swoon. And therewithal Queen Guenever departed. And when Sir Launcelot awoke of his swoon, he leapt out at a bay window into a garden, and there with thorns he was all to-scratched in his visage and his body; and so he ran forth he wist not whither, and was wild wood as ever was man; and so he ran two year, and never man might have grace to know him.

Now turn we unto Queen Guenever and to the fair Lady Elaine, that when Dame Elaine heard the queen so to rebuke Sir Launcelot, and also she saw how he leapt out at a bay window, then she said unto Queen Guenever: Madame ye are greatly to blame for Sir Launcelot, for now have ye lost him, for I saw and heard by his countenance that he is mad for ever. Alas, madam, ye do great sin, and to yourself great dishonour, for ye have a lord of your own, and therefore it is your part to love him; for there is no queen in this world hath such another king as ye have. And, if ye were not, I might have the love of my lord Sir Launcelot; and cause I have to love him for I am his, and by him I have borne a fair son, and his name is Galahad, and he shall be in his time the best knight of the world. Dame Elaine, said the queen, when it is daylight I charge you and command you to avoid my court; and for the love ye owe unto Sir Launcelot discover not his counsel, for an ye do it will be his death. As for that, said Dame

Elaine, I dare undertake he is marred forever, and that have ye made; for ye, nor I, are like to rejoice him; for he made the most piteous groans when he leapt out at yonder bay window that ever I heard man make. Alas, said fair Elaine, and alas, said Queen Guenever, for now I wot well we have lost him for ever.

So on the morn Dame Elaine took her leave to depart, and she would no longer abide. Then King Arthur brought her on her way with mo than a hundred knights. And by the way she told Sir Bors de Ganis all how it betid that same night, and how Sir Launcelot leapt out at a window araged out of his wit. Alas, said Sir Bors, betwixt you both ye have destroyed that good knight. As for me, said Dame Elaine, I said never nor did never thing that should in any wise displease him, but with the rebuke that Queen Guenever gave him I saw him swoon to the earth; and when he awoke he took his sword in his hand, naked save his shirt, and leapt out at a window with the grisliest groan that ever I heard man make. Now farewell, Dame Elaine, said Sir Bors, and hold my lord Arthur with a tale as long as ye can, for I will turn again to Queen Guenever and give her a hete; and I require you, as ever ye will have my service, make good watch and espy if ever ye may see my lord Sir Launcelot. Truly, said fair Elaine, I shall do all that I may, for as fain would I know and wit where he is become, as you, or any of his kin, or Queen Guenever; and cause great enough have I thereto as well as any other. And wit ye well I would lose my life for him rather than he should be hurt; but alas! I cast me never for to see him, and the chief causer of

this is Dame Guenever. Madam, said Dame Brisen, I pray you heartily let Sir Bors depart as fast as he may to seek Sir Launcelot, for I warn you he is clean out of his mind.

Then wept Dame Elaine, and so did Sir Bors de Ganis; and so they departed, and Sir Bors rode straight unto Queen Guenever. And when she saw Sir Bors she wept as she were wood. Fie on your weeping, said Sir Bors, for ye weep never but when there is no bote. Alas, that ever Sir Launcelot's kin saw you, for now have ye lost the best knight of our blood, that was all our leader and our succour; and I dare say and make it good that all kings, christian nor heathen, may not find such a knight, for to speak of his nobleness and courtesy, with his beauty and his gentleness. Alas, said Sir Bors, what shall we do that be of his blood? Alas, said Sir Ector de Maris. Alas, said Lionel.

And when the queen heard them say so she fell to the earth in a dead swoon. And then Sir Bors took her up, and dawed her; and when she was awaked she kneeled afore the three knights, and besought them to seek him. And spare not for no goods but that he be found, for I wot he is out of his mind. And Sir Bors, Sir Ector, and Sir Lionel departed from the queen, for they might not abide no longer for sorrow. And then the queen sent them treasure enough for their expenses, and so they took their horses and their armour and departed. And thus they rode nigh a quarter of a year, endlong and overthwart, in many places, forests and wilderness, and oft times were evil lodged for Sir Launcelot's sake; and yet for all their labour and seeking could they never

hear word of him. And wit ye well these three knights were passing sorry. Then Sir Gawaine, Sir Uwaine, Sir Sagramore le Disirous, Sir Aglovale and Sir Percivale de Galis took upon them by the great desire of King Arthur, and in especial by the queen, to seek throughout all England, Wales, and Scotland, to find Sir Launcelot, and with them rode eighteen knights mo to bear them fellowship; and so were they three and twenty knights.

And now leave we them of a while, and speak we of Sir Launcelot that suffered and endured many sharp showers, that ever ran wild wood from place to place, and lived by fruit and such as he might get, and drank water two year.

And then upon a day Sir Launcelot ran his way into the forest; and by adventure he came to the city of Corbin, where Dame Elaine was, that bare Galahad, Sir Launcelot's son. And so when he was entered into the town he ran through the town to the castle; and then all the young men of that city ran after Sir Launcelot and there they threw turves at him, and gave him many sad strokes. And ever as Sir Launcelot might overreach any of them, he threw them so they would never come in his hands no more, and so fled into the castle; and then came out knights and squires and rescued Sir Launcelot. And when they beheld him and looked upon his person, they thought they saw never so goodly a man. And when they saw so many wounds upon him, all they deemed that he had been a man of worship. And then they ordained him clothes to his body, and straw underneath him and a little house. And then every day they would throw him meat and set him drink.

So it befell that King Pelles had a nephew, his name was Castor; and so he desired of the king to be made knight, and so at the request of this Castor the king made him knight at the feast of Candlemas. And when Sir Castor was made knight, that same day he gave many gowns. And then Sir Castor sent for the fool—that was Sir Launcelot. And when he was come afore Sir Castor, he gave Sir Launcelot a robe of scarlet and all that longed unto him. And when Sir Launcelot was so arrayed like a knight, he was the seemliest man in all the court, and none so well made. So when he saw his time he went into the garden, and there Sir Launcelot laid him down by a well and slept. And so at-after noon Dame Elaine and her maidens came into the garden to play them; and as they roamed up and down one of Dame Elaine's maidens espied where lay a goodly man by the well sleeping, and anon showed him to Dame Elaine. And when Dame Elaine beheld him, anon she fell in remembrance of him, and knew him verily for Sir Launcelot; and therewithal she fell a-weeping so heartily that she sank even to the earth; and when she had thus wept a great while, then she arose and called her maidens and said she was sick.

And so she yede out of the garden, and she went straight to her father, and there she took him apart by herself; and then she said: O father, now have I need of your help, and but if that ye help me farewell my good days for ever. What is that, daughter, said King Pelles. Sir, she said, thus is it: in your garden I went for to sport, and there by the well I found Sir Launcelot du Lake sleeping. I may not believe that,

said King Pelles. Sir, she said, truly he is there, and meseemeth he should be distract out of his wit. Then hold you still, said the king, and let me deal. Then the king called to him such as he most trusted, a four persons, and Dame Elaine his daughter. And when they came to the well and beheld Sir Launcelot, anon Dame Brisen knew him. Sir, said she, we must be wise how we deal with him, for this knight is out of his mind, and if we awake him rudely what he will do we all know not ; but ye shall abide, and I shall throw such an enchantment upon him that he shall not awake within the space of an hour ; and so she did.

Then within a little while after, the king commanded that all people should avoid, that none should be in that way thereas the king would come. And so when this was done, these four men and these ladies laid hand on Sir Launcelot, and so they bare him into a tower, and so into a chamber where was the holy vessel of the Sangreal ; and there came an holy man and unhilled that vessel, and so by miracle and by virtue of that holy vessel Sir Launcelot was healed and recovered. And when he was awaked he groaned and sighed, and complained greatly that he was passing sore.

And when Sir Launcelot saw King Pelles and Elaine, he waxed ashamed and said thus : O Lord Jesu, how came I here ? for God's sake, my lord, let me wit how I came here. Sir, said Dame Elaine, into this country ye came like a madman, clean out of your wit, and here have ye been kept as a fool ; and no creature here knew what ye were, until by fortune a maiden of mine brought me unto you whereas ye lay sleeping by a well, and anon

as I verily beheld you I knew you. And then I told my father, and so were ye brought afore this holy vessel, and by virtue of it thus were ye healed. O Jesu mercy, said Sir Launcelot; if this be sooth, how many there be that know of my woodness! So God help me, said Elaine, no more but my father, and I, and Dame Brisen. Now for God's love, said Sir Launcelot, keep it in counsel, and let no man know it in the world, for I am sore ashamed that I have been thus miscarried; for I am banished out of the country of Logris for ever, that is for to say the country of England.

And so Sir Launcelot lay more than a fortnight or ever that he might stir for soreness. And then upon a day he said unto Dame Elaine these words: Lady Elaine, for your sake I have had much travail, care, and anguish, it needeth not to rehearse it, ye know how. Notwithstanding I know well I have done foul to you when that I drew my sword to you, to have slain you. And all was the cause that ye and Dame Brisen deceived me. Now will ye for my love, said Sir Launcelot, go unto your father and get me a place of him wherein I may dwell? for in the court of King Arthur may I never come. Sir, said Dame Elaine, I will live and die with you and only for your sake; and if my life might not avail you and my death might avail you, wit you well I would die for your sake. And I will go to my father, and I am sure there is nothing that I can desire of him but I shall have it. And where ye be, my lord Sir Launcelot, doubt ye not but I will be with you with all the service that I may do. So forthwithal she went to her father and said, Sir, my lord, Sir Launcelot, desireth

to be here by you in some castle of yours. Well daughter, said the king, sith it is his desire to abide in these marches he shall be in the Castle of Bliant, and there shall ye be with him, and twenty of the fairest ladies that be in the country, and they shall all be of the great blood, and ye shall have ten knights with you ; for, daughter, I will that ye wit we all be honoured by the blood of Sir Launcelot.

Then went Dame Elaine unto Sir Launcelot, and told him all how her father had devised for him and her. And then, after this, King Pelles with ten knights, and Dame Elaine, and twenty ladies rode unto the Castle of Bliant that stood in an island beclosed in iron, with a fair water deep and large. And when they were there Sir Launcelot let call it the Joyous Isle ; and there was he called none otherwise but Le Chevaler Mal Fet, the knight that hath trespassed. Then Sir Launcelot let make him a shield all of sable, and a queen crowned in the midst, all of silver, and a knight clean armed kneeling afore her. And every day once, for any mirths that all the ladies might make him, he would once every day look towards the realm of Logris, where King Arthur and Queen Guenever was. And then would he fall upon a weeping as his heart should to-brast.

So it fell that time Sir Launcelot heard of a jousting fast by his castle, within three leagues. Then he called unto him a dwarf, and he bade him go unto that jousting : and or ever the knights depart, look thou make there a cry, in hearing of all the knights, that there is one knight in the Joyous Isle, that is the Castle of Bliant, and say his name is Le Chevaler Mal Fet, that will joust against knights that will come.

So when this cry was made, unto Joyous Isle drew knights to the number of five hundred; and wit ye well there was never seen in Arthur's days one knight that did so much deeds of arms as Sir Launcelot did three days together; for as the book maketh truly mention, he had the better of all the five hundred knights, and there was not one slain of them. And after that Sir Launcelot made them all a great feast.

And in the meanwhile came Sir Percivale de Galis and Sir Ector de Maris under that castle that was called the Joyous Isle. And as they beheld that gay castle they would have gone to that castle, but they might not for the broad water, and bridge could they find none. Then they saw on the other side a lady with a sperhawk on her hand, and Sir Percivale called unto her, and asked her who was in that castle. Fair knights, she said, here within this castle is the fairest lady in this land, and her name is Elaine. Also we have in this castle the fairest knight and the mightiest man that is I dare say living, and he called himself le Chevaler Mal Fet. How came he into these marches? said Sir Percivale. Truly, said the damosel, he came into this country like a mad man, with dogs and boys chasing him through the city of Corbin, and by the holy vessel of the Sangreal he was brought into his wit again; but he will not do battle with no knight but by underne or by noon. And if ye list to come into the castle, said the lady, ye must ride unto the further side of the castle and there shall ye find a vessel that will bare you and your horse. Then they departed and came unto the vessel. And then Sir Percivale alighted, and said to Sir Ector de Maris: Ye

shall abide me here until that I wit what manner a knight he is. Do ye as ye list, said Sir Ector, and here I shall abide you until that I hear of you.

Then passed Sir Percivale the water, and when he came to the castle gate he bade the porter: Go thou to the good knight within the castle, and tell him here is come an errant knight to joust with him. Sir, said the porter, ride ye within the castle, and there is a common place for jousting, that lords and ladies may behold you. So anon as Sir Launcelot had warning he was soon ready; and there Sir Percivale and Sir Launcelot encountered with such a might that both the horses and the knights fell to the earth. Then they avoided their horses, and flang out noble swords, and hurtled together with their shields like two boars, and either wounded other passing sore. At the last Sir Percivale spake first when they had foughten there more than two hours. Fair knight, said he, I require thee tell me thy name, for I met never with such a knight. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, my name is Le Chevaler Mal Fet. Now tell me your name, I require you, gentle knight. Truly, said Sir Percivale, my name is Sir Percivale de Galis, that was brother unto the good knight, Sir Lamorak de Galis, and King Pellinore was our father. Alas, said Sir Launcelot, what have I done to fight with you that art a knight of the Round Table, that sometime was your fellow.

And therewithal Sir Launcelot kneeled down upon his knees, and threw away his shield and his sword from him. When Sir Percivale saw him do so he marvelled what he meant. And then thus he said: Sir knight, whatsomever thou be, I require thee upon the high

order of knighthood, tell me thy true name. Then he said; So God me help, my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake, King's Ban's son of Benoy. Alas, said Percivale, what have I done? I was sent by the queen for to seek you, and so I have sought you nigh this two year, and yonder is Sir Ector de Maris, your brother, abideth me on the other side of the yonder water. Now, for God's sake, forgive me mine offences that I have here done. It is soon forgiven, said Sir Launcelot.

Then Sir Percivale sent for Sir Ector de Maris, and when Sir Launcelot had a sight of him, he ran unto him and took him in his arms; and then Sir Ector kneeled down, and either wept upon other, that all had pity to behold them. Then came Dame Elaine, and she there made them great cheer as might lie in her power; and there she told Sir Ector and Sir Percivale how and in what manner Sir Launcelot came into that country, and how he was healed. And these knights there reposed them and made great joy of Sir Launcelot.

And so it befell upon a day Sir Ector and Sir Percivale came to Sir Launcelot and asked him what he would do, and whether he would go with them unto King Arthur or not. Nay, said Sir Launcelot, that may not be by no mean, for I was so entreated at the court that I cast me never to come there more. Sir, said Sir Ector, I am your brother, and ye are the man in the world that I love most; and if I understood that it were your disworship, ye may understand I would never counsel you thereto; but King Arthur and all his knights, and in especial Queen Guenever, made such dole and sorrow that it was marvel to hear and see.

And ye must remember the great worship and renown that ye be of, how that ye have been more spoken of than any other knight that is now living, for there is none that beareth the name now but ye and Sir Tristram. Therefore brother, said Sir Ector, make you ready to ride to the court with us, and I dare say there was never knight better welcome to the court than ye; and I wot well and can make it good, said Sir Ector, it hath cost my lady, the queen, twenty thousand pounds the seeking of you. Well brother, said Sir Launcelot, I will do after your counsel, and ride with you.

So then they took their horses and made them ready, and took their leave at King Pelles and at Dame Elaine, And when Sir Launcelot should depart Dame Elaine made great sorrow. My lord, Sir Launcelot, said she, at this same feast of Pentecost shall your son and mine, Galahad, be made knight, for he is fully now fifteen winter old. Do as ye list, said Sir Launcelot; God give him grace to prove a good knight. As for that, said Dame Elaine, I doubt not he shall prove the best man of his kin except one. Then shall he be a man good enough, said Sir Launcelot.

Then they departed, and within five days journey they came to Camelot, that is called in English, Winchester. And when Sir Launcelot was come among them, the king and all the knights made great joy of him. And there Sir Percivale de Galis and Sir Ector de Maris began and told the whole adventures: that Sir Launcelot had been out of his mind the time of his absence, and how he called himself Le Chevaler Mal Fet; and in three days Sir Launcelot smote down

five hundred knights. And ever as Sir Ector and Sir Percivale told these tales of Sir Launcelot, Queen Guenever wept as she should have died. Then the queen made great cheer. O Jesu, said King Arthur, I marvel for what cause ye, Sir Launcelot, went out of your mind. I and many others deem it was for the love of fair Elaine, the daughter of King Pelles, by whom ye are noised that ye have a son, and his name is Galahad, and men say he shall do marvels.

My lord, said Sir Launcelot, if I did any folly I have that I sought. And therewithal the king spake no more. But all Sir Launcelot's kin knew for whom he went out of his mind.

Sir Launcelot returned only once again in his life to Corbin. He went by adventure in the quest of the Sangreal, not drawn by the love of fair Elaine. And there he saw all he was ever again to see of the miraculous holy vessel before it vanished away forever from that land. For the book says he came by night and stood at a chamber door of that castle and heard a voice which sang so sweetly that it seemed none earthly thing; and him thought the voice said: Joy and honour be to the Father of Heaven. Then he enforced him mickle to undo the door, and said: Fair sweet Father, Jesu Christ, if ever I did thing that pleased Thee, Lord for Thy pity never have me not in despite for my sins done aforetime, and that Thou show me something of that I seek. And with that he saw the chamber door open, and there came out a great clearness, that the house was as bright as all the torches of the world had been there.

Then looked he up in the midst of the chamber, and saw a table of silver, and the Holy Vessel, covered with red samite, and many angels about it, whereof one held a candle of wax burning, and the other held a cross, and the ornaments of an altar. And before the Holy Vessel he saw a good man clothed as a priest. And it seemed he was at the sacring of the mass. And it seemed to Launcelot that above the priest's hands were three men, whereof the two put the youngest by likeness between the priest's hands; and so he lift it up right high, and it seemed to show so to the people. And then Launcelot marvelled not a little, for him thought the priest was so greatly charged of the figure that him seemed that he should fall to the earth. And when he saw none about him that would help him, then came he to the door a great pace, and said: Fair Father Jesu Christ, ne take it for no sin though I help the good man which hath great need of help.

Right so he entered into the chamber, and came towards the table of silver; and when he came nigh he felt a breath, that him thought it was intermeddled with fire, which smote him so sore in the visage that him thought it brent his visage; and therewith he fell to the earth and had no power to arise, as he that was so araged, that had lost the power of his body, and his hearing, and his seeing. Then he felt many hands about him, which took him up and bare him out of the chamber door, without any amending of his swoon, and left him there, seeming dead to all people.

So upon the morn when it was fair day they within were arisen, and found Launcelot lying afore the chamber door. All they marvelled how that he came in, and so they looked upon him, and felt his pulse to wit whether there were any life in him; and so they found life in him, but he might not stand nor stir no member that he had. And so they took him by every part of the body, and bare him into a chamber, and laid him in a rich bed, far from all folk; and so he lay four days. Then the one said he was alive, and the other said, Nay. In the name of God, said an old man, for I do you verily to wit he is not dead, but he is so full of life as the mightiest of you all; and therefore I counsel you that he be well kept till God send him life again.

In such manner they kept Sir Launcelot four-and-twenty days and all so many nights, that ever he lay still as a dead man, and at the twenty-fifth day befell him after midday that he opened his eyes. And when he saw folk he made great sorrow, and said: Why have ye awaked me, for I was more at ease than I am now. O Jesu Christ, who might be so blessed that might see openly thy great marvels of secretness there where no sinner may be! What have ye seen? said they about him. I have seen, said he, so great marvels that no tongue may tell, and more than any heart can think, and had not my son been here afore me I had seen much more.

Then they told him how he had lain there four-and-twenty days and nights. Then him thought it was punishment for the four and twenty years he had

been a sinner, wherefore Our Lord put him in penance four and twenty days and nights. Then they asked how it stood with him. Forsooth, said he, I am whole of body, thanked be Our Lord; therefore, sirs, for God's love tell me where I am. Then said they all that he was in the Castle of Corbin.

Sir, said they, the quest of the Sangreal is achieved now right in you, that never shall ye see of the Sangreal no more than ye have seen. Now I thank God, said Launcelot, of his great mercy of that I have seen, for it sufficeth me; for as I suppose no man in this world hath better lived than I have done, to enchieve that I have done. And therewith he arrayed him and put above a robe of scarlet, fresh and new. And when he was so arrayed they marvelled all, for they knew him that he was Launcelot, the good knight. And then they said all: O my lord Sir Launcelot, be that ye? And he said: Truly I am he.

Then came word to King Pelles that the knight that had lain so long dead was Sir Launcelot. Then was the king right glad, and went to see him. And when Launcelot saw him come he dressed him against him, and there made the king great joy of him. And there the king told him tidings that his fair daughter was dead. Then Launcelot was right heavy of it, and said: Sir, me forthinketh the death of your daughter, for she was a full fair lady, fresh and young. And well I wot she bare the best knight that is now on earth, or that ever was sith God was born.

So the king held him there four days, an on the morrow he took his leave at King Pelles and at all the

fellowship, and thanked them of their great labour, and took his arms and departed, and said he would go see the realm of Logris.

The Fair Maid of Astolat

When the last Elaine first saw Launcelot, King Pelles daughter and her fair son were both long dead, for twenty years had elapsed since the day the best knight of the world rode over the bridge of Corbin and delivered a dolorous lady from her pains.

Thus, says the romancer, it passed on till our Lady Day, Assumption. Within a fifteen days of that feast King Arthur let cry a great jousts and a tournament that should be at that day at Camelot, that is Winchester; and the king let cry that he and the King of Scots would joust against all that would come against them. And when this cry was made hither came many knights, the King of Northgalis, and King Anguish of Ireland, and the King with the Hundred Knights, and the King of Northumberland, and many other noble dukes and earls of divers countries. So King Arthur made him ready to depart to these jousts, and would have had the queen with him, but at that time she would not, she said, for she was sick and might not ride at that time. That me repenteth, said the king, for this seven year ye saw not such a noble fellowship together except at Whitsuntide when Galahad departed from the court. Truly, said the queen to the king, ye must hold me excused, I may not be there, and that me repenteth.

And many deemed the queen would not be there because of Sir Launcelot du Lake, for Sir Launcelot would not ride with the king, for he said that he was not whole of his old wound that he had; wherefore the king was heavy and passing wroth. And so he departed towards Winchester with his fellowship.

So when the king was departed the queen called Sir Launcelot to her, and said thus: Sir Launcelot, ye are greatly to blame thus to hold you behind my lord; what, trow ye, what will your enemies and mine say and deem? nought else but, See how Sir Launcelot holdeth him ever behind the king, and so doth the queen, for that they would have their pleasure together.

Madam, said Sir Launcelot, I allow your wit, it is of late come since ye were wise. And therefore, madam, at this time I will be ruled by your counsel, and to-morrow by time I will take my way towards Winchester. But wit ye well at that jousts I will be against the king, and against all his fellowship. Ye may there do as ye list, said the queen, but by my counsel ye shall not be against your king and your fellowship. For therein be full many hard knights of your blood, as ye wot well enough. Madam, said Sir Launcelot, I will take the adventure that God will send me.

And so upon the morn early Sir Launcelot heard mass and brake his fast, and so took his leave of the queen and departed. And then he rode so much until he came to Astolat, that is Guildford. And there it happed him in the eventide he came to an old baron's place that hight Sir Bernard of Astolat. And as Sir Launcelot entered into his lodging, King Arthur

espied him as he did walk in a garden beside the castle, how he took his lodging, and knew him full well. It is well, said King Arthur, unto the knights that were with him, I have espied now one knight that will play his part at the jousts to the which we be gone toward; I undertake he will do marvels. Who is that, we pray you tell us? said many knights. Ye shall not wit for me, said the king, as at this time. And so the king smiled, and went to his lodging.

So when Sir Launcelot was in his lodging, and unarmed him in his chamber, the old baron came to him, and wlcomed him in the best manner; but the old knight knew not Sir Launcelot. Fair sir, said Sir Launcelot to his host, I would pray you to lend me a shield that were not openly known, for mine is well known. Sir, said his host, ye shall have your desire. Wit ye well I have two sons that were but late made knights, and the eldest hight, Sir Tirre, and he was hurt that same day he was made knight, that he may not ride, and his shield ye shall have. And my youngest son hight Lavaine, and if it please you, he shall ride with you unto the jousts; and he is of his age strong and wight, for much my heart giveth unto you that ye should be a noble knight, therefore I pray you, tell me your name, said Sir Bernard. As for that, said Sir Launcelot, ye must hold me excused at this time, and if God give me grace to speed well at the jousts I shall come again and tell you. But I pray you in any wise let me have your son, Sir Lavaine, with me, and that I may have his brother's shield. All this shall be done, said Sir Bernard.

This old baron had a daughter that was called that

time the Fair Maid of Astolat. And ever she beheld Sir Launcelot wonderfully; and as the book saith, she cast such a love unto Sir Launcelot that she could never withdraw her love wherefore she died, and her name was Elaine le Blank. So thus as she came to and fro she was so hot in her love that she besought Sir Launcelot to wear upon him at the jousts a token of hers. Fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, an if I grant you that, ye may say I do more for your love than ever I did for lady or damosel. Then he remembered him he would go to the jousts disguised. And because he had never fore that time borne no manner of token of no damosel, than he bethought him that he would bear one of her, that none of his blood thereby, might know him, and then he said: Fair maiden, I will grant you to wear a token of yours upon mine helmet, and therefore what it is, shew it me. Sir, she said, it is a red sleeve of mine, of scarlet, well embroidered with great pearls: and so she brought it him. So Sir Launcelot received it and said: never did I erst so much for no damosel. And then Sir Launcelot betook the fair maiden his shield in keeping, and prayed her to keep it until that he came again; and so that night he had merry rest and great cheer, for ever the damosel Elaine was about Sir Launcelot all the while she might be suffered.

So upon a day, on the morn, King Arthur and all his knights departed. And so when the king was ridden, Sir Launcelot and Sir Lavaine made them ready to ride, and either of them had white shields, and the red sleeve Sir Launcelot let carry with him. And so they took

their leave at the old baron, and at his daughter, the Fair Maid of Astolat. And then they rode so long till they came to Camelot; and there was great press of knights. But Sir Launcelot was lodged privily by the means of Sir Lavaine with a rich burgess, that no man in that town was ware what they were. And so they reposed them there till Our Lady Day, Assumption. So then trumpets blew unto the field, and King Arthur was set on high upon a scaffold to behold who did best. But the king would not suffer his nephew, Sir Gawaine to go from him, for never had Sir Gawaine the better an Sir Launcelot were in the field.

Then Sir Launcelot made him ready, and put the red sleeve upon his head, and fastened it fast; and so Sir Launcelot and Sir Lavaine rode until a little leaved wood behind the party that held against King Arthur's party, and there they held them still till the parties smote together. And then came in the King of Scots and the King of Ireland with fifteen knights of the Round Table and they beat back the King of Northumberland and the King of Northgalis. When Sir Launcelot saw this, as he hoved in a little leaved wood, then he said unto Sir Lavaine: See yonder is a company of good knights, and they hold them together as boars that were chafed with dogs. Now, an ye will help me a little, ye shall see yonder fellowship that chaseth now these men in our side, that they shall go as fast backward as they went forward. Sir, spare not, said Sir Lavaine, for I shall do what I may. Then Sir Launcelot and Sir Lavaine came in at the thickest of the press, and what with his spear what with his sword,

Sir Launcelot smote down twelve of the knights of the Round Table and Sir Lavaine three; and then the knights of the Round Table withdrew them aback, after they had gotten their horses as well as they might. O Jesu mercy, said Sir Gawaine, what knight is yonder that doth so marvellous deeds of arms in that field? I wot well what he is, said King Arthur, but at this time I will not name him. Sir, said Sir Gawaine, I would say it were Sir Launcelot by his riding and his buffets that I see him deal, but ever meseemeth it should not be he, for that he beareth the red sleeve upon his head, for I wist him never bear token at no jousts, of lady nor gentlewoman.

Then the party that were against King Arthur were well comforted, and then they held them together that beforehand were sore rebuked. Then Sir Bors called unto him eight knights of his blood, and these nine knights of Sir Launcelot's kin thrust in mightily, for they were all noble knights; and there encountered with Sir Launcelot all at once Sir Bors, Sir Ector, and Sir Lionel and all they three smote him at once with their spears. And with force of themself they smote Sir Launcelot's horse to the earth; and by misfortune Sir Bors smote Sir Launcelot through the shield into the side, and the spear brake, and the head left still in his side.

When Sir Lavaine saw his master lie on the ground, by great force he gat a horse and brought him to Sir Launcelot, and maugre of them all he made him to mount upon that horse. And then Sir Launcelot drew his sword and he gave Sir Bors such a buffet that

ne made him bow his head passing low; and there-vithal he raced of his helm and might have slain him; ınd so pulled him down, and in the same wise he served Sir Ector and Sir Lionel. For as the book saith he might ıave slain them, but when he saw their visages his heart night not serve him thereto. And then afterward ıe hurled into the thickest press of them all, and did here the marvelloust deeds of arms that ever man saw or heard speak of, and ever Sir Lavaine, the good knight with him.

Mercy Jesu, said Gawaine to Arthur, I marvel what knight he is with the red sleeve. And then the king blew unto lodging, and the prize was given by heralds ınto the knight with the white shield that bare the red sleeve. Then came the King with the Hundred Knights and said unto Sir Launcelot: Fair knight, God bless thee, for much have ye done this day for ıs, therefore we pray you that you will come with us hat ye may receive the honour and the prize as ye ıave worshipfully deserved it. My fair lord, said Sir Launcelot, wit ye well if I have deserved thanks I have ore bought it, and that me repenteth, for I am like ıever to escape with my life; therefore, fair lords pray you that ye will suffer me to depart, for I am ore hurt. I take none force of none honour, for I ıad liefer to repose me than to be lord of all the world. And therewithal he groaned piteously, and rode a great vallop away-ward from them until he came under a vood's side.

And when he saw he was from the field nigh a nile, he said with an high voice: O gentle knight, Sir

Lavaine, help me that this truncheon were out of my side, for it sticketh so sore it nigh slayeth me. O mine own lord, said Sir Lavaine, I dread me sore an I pull out the truncheon that ye shall be in peril of death. I charge you, said Sir Launcelot, as ye love me, draw it out. And therewithal he descended from his horse; and right so did Sir Lavaine; and forthwithal Sir Lavaine drew the truncheon out of his side, and he gave a great shriek and a marvellous grisly groan, and the blood brast out nigh a pint at once, that at the last he sank down, and so swooned pale and deadly. Alas, said Sir Lavaine, what shall I do? And then he turned Sir Launcelot into the wind, but so he lay there nigh half an hour as he had been dead.

And so at the last Sir Launcelot cast up his eyes and said: O Lavaine, help me that I were on my horse, for here is fast by a gentle hermit that sometime was a full noble knight, and he a full noble surgeon and a good leech. Now let see, help me up that I were there, for ever my heart giveth me that I shall never die of my cousin germain's hands. And then with great pain Sir Lavaine help him upon his horse, and ever Sir Launcelot bled that it ran down to the earth; and so by fortune they came to that hermitage the which was under a wood, and a great cliff on the other side, and a fair water running under it. And then Sir Lavaine beat on the gate with the butt of his spear, and cried fast: Let in for Jesu's sake.

And there came a fair child to them and asked them what they would. Fair son, said Sir Lavaine, go and

pray thy lord, the hermit, for God's sake to let in here a knight that is full sore wounded. So the child went in lightly, and then he brought the hermit, the which was a passing good man.

And when the hermit beheld Sir Launcelot, as he sat leaning upon his saddle-bow ever bleeding piteously, and ever the knight-hermit thought that he should know him, but he could not bring him to knowledge because he was so pale for bleeding. What knight are ye, said the hermit, and where were ye born? My fair lord, said Sir Launcelot, I am a stranger and a knight adventurous, that laboureth throughout many realms for to win worship.

Then the hermit advised him better, and saw by a wound on his cheek that he was Sir Launcelot. Alas, said the hermit, mine own lord, why lain you your name from me? Forsooth I ought to know you of right, for ye are the most noblest knight of the world. Sir, said he, sith ye know me, help me an ye may, for God's sake, for I would be out of this pain at once, either to death or to life. Have ye no doubt, said the hermit, ye shall live and fare right well. And so the hermit called to him two of his servants, and they bare him into the hermitage, and lightly unarmed him, and laid him in his bed. And then anon the hermit staunched his blood, and made him to drink good wine, so that Sir Launcelot was well refreshed and knew himself; for there were none hermits in those days but that they had been men of worship; and those hermits held great household, and refreshed people that were in distress.

Now turn we unto King Arthur that asked the King of Northgalis and their fellowship, where was that knight that bare the red sleeve: Bring him afore me that he may have his laud, and honour, and the prize, as is right. Then spake the King with the Hundred Knights: We suppose that knight is mischieved, and that he is never likely to see you nor none of us all. Alas, said the king, how may this be, is he so hurt? What is his name? Truly, said they all, we know not his name, nor from whence he came, nor whither he would. Alas, said the king, this be to me the worse tidings that came to me this seven year, for I would not for all the lands I wield to know that that noble knight were slain. Know ye him? said they all. As for that, said Arthur, whether I know him or not, ye shall not know for me what man he is, but Almighty Jesu send me good tiding of him. And so said they all.

Then within two days King Arthur and all the fellowship returned unto London again. And so as they rode by the way it happed Sir Gawaine at Astolat to lodge with Sir Bernard. And so as Sir Gawaine was in his chamber to repose him, the old baron came unto him, and his daughter Elaine, to cheer him and to ask him what tidings, and who did best at the tournament of Winchester. So God me help, said Sir Gawaine, there were two knights that bare two white shields, but the one of them bare a red sleeve on his head, and certainly he was one of the best knights that ever I saw joust in field. For I dare say he smote down forty knights of the Round Table, and his fellow did right well and worshipfully. Now blessed be God, said the

Fair Maid of Astolat, that that knight sped so well, for he is the man in the world that I first loved, and truly he shall be the last that ever I shall love. Now, fair maid, said Sir Gawaine, is that good knight your love? Certainly sir, said she, wit ye well he is my love. Then know ye his name? said Sir Gawaine. Nay truly, said Fair Elaine, I know not his name nor from whence he cometh, but to say that I love him I promise you and God that I love him. How had ye knowledge of him first? said Sir Gawaine.

Then she told him as ye have heard to-fore, and how her father betook him her brother to do him service, and how her father lent him her brother's, Sir Tirre's shield: And here with me he left his own shield. For what cause did he so? said Sir Gawaine. For this cause, said the damosel, for his shield was too well known among many noble knights. Ah fair damosel, said Sir Gawaine, please it you let me have a sight of that shield. Sir, said she, it is in my chamber covered with a case, and if ye will come with me ye shall see it. Not so, said Sir Bernard, till his daughter, let send for it.

So when the shield was come, Sir Gawaine took off the case, and when he beheld that shield he knew anon that it was Sir Launcelot's shield, and his own arms. Ah Jesu mercy, he said, now is my heart more heavier than ever it was to-fore. Why? said Elaine. For I have great cause said Sir Gawaine. Is that knight that owneth this shield your love? Yea, truly, said she, my love he is, God would I were his love So God me speed, said Sir Gawaine, fair damosel, ye have right,

for an he be your love, ye love the most honourable knight of the world, and the man of most worship. So me thought ever, said the fair maid, for never or that time, for no knight that ever I saw, loved I never none erst. God grant, said Sir Gawaine, that either of you may rejoice other, but that is in a great adventure. But truly ye may say ye have a fair grace, for why I have known that noble knight this four and twenty year, and never or that day, saw nor heard say that ever he bear token or sign of no lady, gentlewoman, ne maiden at no jousts nor tournament. And therefore ye are much beholden to him to give him thanks. But I dread me that ye shall never see him in this world. Alas, said she, how may this be, is he slain ? I say not so, said Sir Gawaine, but wit ye well he is grievously wounded and more likelier to be dead than to be alive ; and wit ye well he is the noble knight, Sir Launcelot, for by this shield I know him. Alas, said the Fair Maiden of Astolat, what was his hurt ? Truly, said Sir Gawaine, the man in the world that loved him best hurt him so ; and I dare say an that knight that hurt him knew he had hurt Sir Launcelot, it would be the most sorrow that ever came to his heart.

Now fair father, said then Elaine, I require you give me leave to ride and to seek him, or else I wot well I shall go out of my mind, for I shall never stint till that I find him and my brother, Sir Lavaine.

Do as it liketh you, said her father, for me sore repenteth of the hurt of that noble knight. Right so the maid made her ready, and before Sir Gawaine, making great dole.

Then on the morn Sir Gawaine came to King Arthur, and told him how he had found Sir Launcelot's shield in the keeping of the Fair Maiden of Astolat. All that knew I aforehand, said King Arthur, for I espied when he came in till his lodging full late in the evening in Astolat. By my head, said Sir Gawaine, the Fair Maiden of Astolat loveth him marvellously well; what it meaneth I cannot say, and she is riden after to seek him. So the king and all came to London, and there Sir Gawaine openly disclosed to all the court that it was Sir Launcelot that jousted best.

And when Sir Bors heard that, wit ye well he was an heavy man, and so were all his kinsmen. But when Queen Guenever wist that Sir Launcelot bare the red sleeve of the Fair Maiden of Astolat she was nigh out of her mind for wrath. And then she sent for Sir Bors de Ganis in all haste that might be. Ah Sir Bors, she said when he was come to-fore her, have ye heard say how falsely Sir Launcelot hath betrayed me? Alas madam, said Sir Bors, I am afeard he hath betrayed himself and us all. No force, said the queen, though he be destroyed, for he is a false traitor-knight. Madam, said Sir Bors, I pray you say not so, for wit ye well I may not hear such language of him. Why Sir Bors, said she, should I not call him traitor when he bare the red sleeve at Winchester, at the great jousts?

Madam, said Sir Bors, that sleeve-bearing repenteth me sore, but I daresay he did it to none evil intent, but for this cause that none of his blood should know him. Fie on him, said the queen, for I heard Sir Gawaine say before my lord Arthur that it was marvel to tell

the great love that is between the Fair Maiden of Astolat and him. Madam, said Sir Bors, I may not warn Sir Gawaine to say what it pleased him; but I dare say as for my lord, Sir Launcelot, that he loveth no lady, gentlewoman, nor maid, but all he loveth in like much. And therefore Madam, ye may say what ye will, but wit ye well I will haste me to seek him, and God send me good tidings of him. And so leave we there, and speak we of Sir Launcelot that lay in great peril.

So as fair Elaine came to Winchester she sought there all about, and by fortune Sir Lavaine was ridden to play him, to enchafe his horse. And anon as Elaine saw him she knew him, and then she cried aloud to him. And when he heard her anon he came to her, and then she asked her brother how did my lord, Sir Launcelot. Who told you, sister, that my lord's name was Sir Launcelot? Then she told him how Sir Gawaine by his shield knew him. So they rode together till that they came to the hermitage.

So Sir Lavaine brought her in to Sir Launcelot; and when she saw him lie so sick and pale in his bed she might not speak, but suddenly she fell to the earth in a swoon. And when she was relieved, she shrieked and said: My lord, Sir Launcelot, alas, why be ye in this plight? and then she swooned again. And then Sir Launcelot prayed Sir Lavaine to take her up: And bring her to me. And when she came to herself Sir Launcelot kissed her, and said: Fair maiden, why fare ye thus? ye put me to pain; wherefore make ye no more such cheer, for an ye be come to comfort me ye be right welcome; and of this little hurt that I have I

shall be right hastily whole by the grace of God. But I marvel, said Sir Launcelot, who told you my name? Then the fair maiden told him all how Sir Gawaine was lodged with her father. And there by your shield he discovered your name. And then Sir Launcelot compassed in his mind that Sir Gawaine would tell Queen Guenever how he bare the red sleeve, and for whom; and that he wist well would turn into great anger.

So this maiden Elaine never went from Sir Launcelot but watched him day and night, and did such attendance to him, that the French book saith there was never woman did more kindlier for man than she. Then Sir Launcelot prayed Sir Lavaine to make aspies in Winchester for Sir Bors if he came there, and told him by what tokens he should know him. For well I am sure that Sir Bors will seek me, for he is the same good knight that hurt me.

And then Sir Lavaine came to Winchester and found Sir Bors, and there he told him what he was, and with whom he was. Now fair knight, said Sir Bors, I require you that ye will bring me to my lord, Sir Launcelot. Sir, said Sir Lavaine, take your horse and within this hour you shall see him.

And when Sir Bors saw Sir Launcelot lie in his bed pale and discoloured, anon Sir Bors lost his countenance, and for kindness and pity he might not speak, but wept tenderly. Then he said thus: O my lord, Sir Launcelot, God you bless, and send you hasty recover; and full heavy am I of my misfortune, for now I may call myself unhappy. And I dread me that God

is greatly displeased with me, that he would suffer me for to hurt you that are all our leader and our worship. Alas that ever such a caitiff-knight as I am should have power by unhappiness to hurt the most noblest knight of the world. Where I so shamefully set upon you and overcharged you, and where ye might have slain me ye saved me; and so did not I, for I and your blood did to you our utterance, wherefore my lord, Sir Launcelot, I ask your mercy. Fair cousin, said Sir Launcelot, ye be right welcome; and wit ye well, overmuch ye say for to please me, for why I have the same I sought; for I would with pride have overcome you all, and there in my pride I was near slain, for it is an old saw, there is hard battle thereas kin and friends do battle either against other. Therefore, fair cousin, let this speech overpass, and all shall be welcome that God sendeth; and let us speak of some rejoicing, for this that is done may not be undone.

Then Sir Bors leaned on his bedside, and told Sir Launcelot how the queen was passing wroth with him, because he wore the red sleeve at the great jousts. Then is the queen wroth, said Sir Launcelot, and therefore am I right heavy, for I deserved no wrath, for all that I did was because I would not be known. Right so I excused you, said Sir Bors, but all was in vain, for she said more largelier to me than I to you now. But is this she, that is so busy about you, that men call the Fair Maiden of Astolat? She it is, said Sir Launcelot, and by no means I cannot put her from me. Why should ye put her from you? said Sir Bors, she is a passing fair damosel, and a well beseen, and well taught;

and God would, fair cousin, that ye could love her, but as to that I may not counsel you. But I see well by her diligence about you that she loveth you entirely. That me repenteth, said Sir Launcelot. Sir, said Sir Bors, she is not the first that hath lost her pain upon you, and that is the more pity: and so they talked of many more things. And so within three or four days Sir Launcelot was big and strong again.

So then they made them ready to depart from the hermit. And so upon a morn they took their horses and Elaine le Blank with them; and when they came to Astolat there were they well lodged, and had great cheer of Sir Bernard, the old baron, and of Sir Tirre, his son. And so upon the morn when Sir Launcelot should depart, fair Elaine brought her father with her, aud Sir Lavaine, and Sir Tirre, and thus she said: My lord, Sir Launcelot, now I see ye will depart; now fair knight and courteous knight, have mercy upon me, and suffer me not to die for thy love. What would ye that I did? said Sir Launcelot. I would have you to my husband, said Elaine. Fair damosel, I thank you, said Sir Launcelot, but truly, said he, I cast me never to be wedded man. Then, fair knight, said she, will ye be my lover? Jesu defend me, said Sir Launcelot, for then I rewarded your father and your brother full evil for their great goodness. Alas, said she, then must I die for your love. Ye shall not so, said Sir Launcelot, for wit ye well fair maiden, I might have been married and I had would, but I never applied me to be married yet; but because, fair damosel, that ye love me as ye say ye do, I will for your good will and kindness show you

some goodness, and that is this, that wheresomever ye will beset your heart upon some good knight that will wed you, I shall give you together a thousand pound yearly to you and to your heirs; this much will I give you, fair madam, for your kindness, and always while I live to be your own knight. Of all this, said the maiden, I will none, for but if ye will wed me, or else be my lover at the least, wit ye well Sir Launcelot my good days are done. Fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, of these two things ye must pardon me.

Then she shrieked shrilly, and fell down in a swoon; and then women bare her into her chamber, and there she made overmuch sorrow; and then Sir Launcelot would depart, and there he asked Sir Lavaine what he would do. What should I do, said Sir Lavaine, but follow you, but if ye drive me from you. Then came Sir Bernard to Sir Launcelot and said: I cannot see but that my daughter Elaine will die for your sake. I may not do withal, said Sir Launcelot, for that me sore repenteth, for I report me to yourself, that my proffer is fair; and me repenteth that she loveth me as she doth; I was never the causer of it; and as for me, I dare do all that a knight should do that she is a clean maiden for me, both for deed and for will. And I am right heavy of her distress, for she is a full fair maiden, good and gentle, and well taught. Father, said Sir Lavaine, she doth as I do, for sithen I first saw my lord, Sir Launcelot, I could never depart from him, nor nought I will an I may follow him.

Then Sir Launcelot took his leave, and so they departed. And when Arthur wist that Sir Launcelot

was come whole and sound the king made great joy of him, and so did all the knights of the Round Table except Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred. Also Queen Guenever was wood wroth with Sir Launcelot, and would by no means speak with him, but estranged herself from him; and Sir Launcelot made all the means that he might for to speak with the queen, but it would not be.

Now speak we of the Fair Maiden of Astolat that made such sorrow day and night that she never slept, ate, nor drank, and ever she made her complaint unto Sir Launcelot. So when she had thus endured a ten days, that she feebled so that she must needs pass out of this world, then she shrieved her clean, and received her Creator. And ever she complained still upon Sir Launcelot. Then her ghostly father bade her leave such thoughts. Then she said, why should I leave such thoughts. Am I not an earthly woman? And all the while the breath is in my body I may complain me, for my belief is I do none offence though I love an earthly man; and I take God to my record I loved never none but Sir Launcelot du Lake, nor never shall, and a clean maiden I am for him and for all other; and sithen it is the sufferance of God that I shall die for the love of so noble a knight, I beseech the High Father of Heaven to have mercy upon my soul, and upon mine innumerable pains that I suffered may be allegiance of part of my sins. For sweet Lord Jesu, said the fair maiden, I take Thee to record, on Thee I was never great offencer against thy laws; but that I loved this noble knight, Sir Launcelot, out of measure, and of

myself, good Lord, I might not withstand the fervent love wherefore I have my death.

And then she called her father, Sir Bernard, and her brother, Sir Tirre, and heartily she prayed her father that her brother might write a letter like as she did indite it: and so her father granted her. And when the letter was written word by word like as she devised, then she prayed her father that she might be watched until she were dead. And while my body is hot let this letter be put in my right hand, and my hand bound fast with the letter until that I be cold, and let me be put in a fair bed with all the richest clothes that I have about me, and so let my bed and all my richest clothes be laid with me in a chariot unto the next place where Thames is; and there let me be put within a barget, and but one man with me, such as ye trust to steer me thither, and that my barget be covered with black samite over and over: thus father I beseech you let it be done. So her father granted it her faithfully, all things should be done like as she had devised. Then her father and her brother made great dole, for when this was done anon she died. And so when she was dead the corpse and the bed all was led the next day unto Thames, and there a man and the corpse, and all, were put into Thames; and so the man steered the barget unto Westminster, and there he rowed a great while to and fro or any espied it.

So by fortune King Arthur and the Queen Guenever were speaking together at a window, and so as they looked into Thames they espied the black barget, and had marvel what it meant. Then the king called Sir

Kay, and showed it him. Go thither, said the king, and take with you Sir Brandiles and Agravaine, and bring me ready word what is there. Then these knights departed and came to the barget and went in; and there they found the fairest corpse lying in a rich bed, and a poor man sitting in the barget's end, and no word would he speak. So these knights returned unto the king again, and told him what they found. That fair corpse will I see, said the king. And so then the king took the queen by the hand, and went thither.

Then the king made the barget to be holden fast, and then the king and the queen entered with certain knights with them: and there he saw the fairest woman lie in a rich bed, covered unto her middle with many rich clothes, and all was of cloth of gold, and she lay as though she had smiled. Then the queen espied a letter in her right hand, and told it to the king. Then the king took it and said: Now am I sure this letter will tell us what she was, and why she is come hither. So then the king and queen went out of the barget, and so commanded a certain man to wait on the barget.

And so when the king was come within his chamber, he called many knights about him, and said that he would wit openly what was written within that letter. Then the king brake it, and made a clerk to read it, and this was the intent of the letter. Most noble knight, Sir Launcelot, now hath death made us two at debate for your love. I was your lover, that men called the Fair Maiden of Astolat; therefore unto all ladies I make my moan, yet pray for my soul and bury me at least, and offer ye my mass-penny: this is my last request.

And a clean maiden I died, I take God to witness; pray for my soul, Sir Launcelot, as thou art peerless. This was all the substance of the letter. And when it was read, the king, the queen, and all the knights wept for pity of the doleful complaints. Then was Sir Launcelot sent for; and when he was come King Arthur made the letter to be read to him.

And when Sir Launcelot heard it word by word, he said: My lord Arthur, wit ye well I am right heavy of the death of this fair damosel. God knows I was never causer of her death by my willing, and that will I report me to her own brother: here he is, Sir Lavaine. I will not say but that she was both fair and good, and much was I beholden unto her, but she loved me out of measure. Ye might have shewed her, said the queen, some bounty and gentleness that might have preserved her life. Madam, said Sir Launcelot, she would none other ways be answered but that she would be my wife, outher else my love; and of these two I would not grant her, but I proffered her, for her good love that she showed me, a thousand pound yearly to her, and to her heirs, and to wed any manner knight that she could find best to love in her heart. For madam, said Sir Launcelot, I love not to be constrained to love; for love must arise of the heart, and not by no constraint. That is truth, said the king, and many knights, love is free in himself, and never will be bounden, for where he is bounden he looseth himself.

Then said the king unto Sir Launcelot: It will be your worship that ye oversee that she be interred worshipfully. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, that shall be

done as I can best devise. And so many knights yede thither to behold that fair maiden. And so upon the morn she was interred richly, and Sir Launcelot offered her mass-penny; and all the knights of the Table Round that were there at that time offered with Sir Launcelot. And then the poor man went again with the barget. Then the queen sent for Sir Launcelot, and prayed him of mercy, for why that she had been wroth with him causeless. This is not the first time, said Sir Launcelot, that ye have been displeased with me causeless, but, madam, ever I must suffer you, but what sorrow I endure I take no force.

HOW SIR GARETH OTHERWISE CALLED BEAU MAINS CAME TO THE PRESENCE OF HIS LADY

IV

LINET AND DAME LIONESSE

Thenne was he ware of two fayre damoyfels

WHEN Arthur held his Round Table most plenour, it fortuned that he commanded that the high feast of Pentecost should be holden at a city and a castle, the which in those days was called Kink Kenadon, upon the sands that marched nigh Wales. So ever the king had a custom that at the feast of Pentecost in especial, afore other feasts in the year, he would not go that day to meat until he had heard or seen of a great marvel. And for that custom all manner of strange adventures came before Arthur as

at that feast. And so Sir Gawaine, a little to-fore noon of the day of Pentecost, espied at a window three men upon horseback, and so the three men alighted, and one of the three men was higher than the other twain by a foot and an half. Then Sir Gawaine went unto the king and said, Sir, go to your meat, for here at hand come strange adventures. So Arthur went unto his meat, and there were all the knights of the Round Table, save only those that were prisoners or slain. For at the high feast evermore was the Round Table fully complished.

Right so came unto the hall two men well beseen and richly, and upon their shoulders there leaned the goodliest young man and the fairest that ever they all saw, and he was large and long, and broad in the shoulders, and well visaged, and the fairest and largest handed that ever man saw, but he fared as though he might not go nor bear himself, but if he leaned upon their shoulders, and right so they yede with him unto the high dais. Then this much young man pulled him aback, and easily stretched up straight saying, King Arthur, God you bless and all your fair fellowship, and in especial the fellowship of the Table Round. And for this cause I am come hither, to pray you and require you to give me three gifts, and they shall not be unreasonably asked, but that ye may worshipfully and honourably grant them me, and to you no great hurt or loss. And the first gift I will ask now, and the other two gifts I will ask this day twelvemonth. Now ask, said Arthur, and ye shall have your asking.

Now sir, this is my petition for this feast, that ye

will give me meat and drink sufficient for this twelvemonth.

My fair son, said Arthur, ask better I counsel thee; for my heart giveth me to thee greatly, that thou art come of men of worship, and greatly my conceit faileth me but thou shalt prove a man of right great worship. Sir, he said, thereof be as it be may, I have asked that I will ask. Well, said the king, ye shall have meat and drink enough; I never defended that none, neither my friend nor my foe. But what is thy name I would wit? I cannot tell you, said he. That is marvel, said the king, that thou knowest not thy name, and thou art the goodliest young man that ever I saw. Then the king betook him to Sir Kay the stewart, and charged that he should give him of all manner of meats and drinks of the best. That shall little need, said Sir Kay, to do such cost upon him; for I dare undertake he is a villain born, and never will make man, for an he had come of gentlemen he would have asked of you horse and armour, but such as he is, so he asketh. And sithen he hath no name, I shall give him a name that shall be Beaumain, that is Fair-hands, and into the kitchen I shall bring him, and there he shall have fat brose every day, that he shall be as fat by the twelvemonths' end as a pork hog. Right so the two men departed and beleft him to Sir Kay, that scorned him and mocked him.

Thereat was Sir Gawaine wroth, and in especial Sir Launcelot bade Sir Kay leave his mocking, for I dare lay my head he shall prove a man of great worship. Let be, said Sir Kay, for as he is, so he hath asked.

And so Sir Kay bade get him a place, and sit down to meat; so Beaumains went to the hall door, and set him down among boys and lads, and there he ate sadly. And then after meat, Sir Launcelot and Sir Gawaine proffered him great kindness; but he refused them all; he would do none other but as Sir Kay commanded him, for no proffer. But as touching Sir Gawaine, he had reason to proffer him lodging, meat, and drink, for he was nearer kin to him than he wist. But that as Sir Launcelot did was of his great gentleness and courtesy.

So thus he was put into the kitchen, and lay nightly as boys of the kitchen did. And so he endured all that twelve month, and never displeased man nor child, but alway he was meek and mild. But ever when that he saw any jousting of knights, that would he see an he might, and where there were any masteries done, thereat would he be, and there might none cast bar nor stone to him by two yards. Then would Sir Kay say, How liketh you my boy of the kitchen? So it passed on to the feast of Whitsuntide. And at that time the king held it at Carlion in the most royallest wise, like as he did yearly. But the king would eat no meat upon the Whitsunday, until he heard some adventures. Then came there a squire and said, sir, ye may go to your meat, for here cometh a damosel with some strange adventures.

Right so there came a damosel into the hall and saluted the king, and prayed him of succour. For whom? said the king, what is the adventure?

Sir, she said, I have a lady of great worship and renown,

and she is besieged with a tyrant, so that she may not out of her castle; and because here are called the noblest knights of the world, I come to you to pray you of succour. What hight your lady, and where dwelleth she, and what is his name that hath besieged her? Sir king, she said, as for my lady's name that shall not ye know for me as at this time, but I let you wit she is a lady of great worship and of great lands; and as for the tyrant that besiegeth her, he is called the Red Knight of the Red Launds. I know him not, said the king. Sir, said Sir Gawaine, I know him well, for he is one of the perilloust knights of the world; men say he hath seven men's strength, and from him I escaped once full hard with my life. Fair damosel, said the king, there be knights here would do their power for to rescue your lady, but because you will not tell her name, nor where she dwelleth, therefore none of my knights that here be now shall go with you by my will. Then must I speak further, said the damosel.

With these words came before the king Beaumains, and thus he said, Sir king, God thank you, I have been this twelvemonth in your kitchen, and have had my full sustenance, and now I will ask my two gifts that be behind. Ask, upon my peril, said the king. Sir, this shall be my two gifts, first that ye will grant me to have this adventure of the damosel, for it belongeth unto me. Thou shalt have it, said the king, I grant it thee. Then, sir, this is the other gift, that ye shall bid Launcelot du Lake to make me knight, for of him I will be made knight and else of none. And when I am passed I pray you let him ride after me, and make

ne knight when I require him. All this shall be done, aid the king. Fie on thee, said the damosel, shall I ave none but one that is your kitchen page? Then vas she wroth, and took her horse and departed. And vith that there came one to Beaumains and told him is horse and armour were come for him; and there vas the dwarf come with all thing that him needed, n the richest manner; thereat all the court had much narvel from whence came all that gear. So when he vas armed there was none but few so goodly a man as ie was; and right so he came into the hall and took is leave of King Arthur, and Sir Gawaine, and Sir Launcelot, and prayed that he would hie after him and so leparted.

But there went many after to behold how well ie was horsed and trapped in cloth of gold, but he iad neither shield nor spear. Then Sir Kay said all pen in the hall, I will ride after my boy in the kitchen o wit whether he will know me for his better. Said Sir Launcelot and Sir Gawaine, Yet abide at home. So Sir Kay made him ready and took his horse and his pear, and rode after him. And right as Beaumains overtook the damosel, right so came Sir Kay and said, Beaumains, what sir, know ye not me? Then he turned is horse, and knew it was Sir Kay, that had done him ll the despite as ye have had heard afore. Yes, said Beaumains, I know you for an ungentle knight of the ourt, and therefore beware of me. Therewith Sir Kay put his spear in rest, and ran straight upon him; ut Beaumains put away his spear with his sword, and vith a foin thrust him through the side, that Sir Kay

fell down as he had been dead; and he alighted down and took Sir Kay's shield and his spear, and stert upon his own horse and rode his way.

All that saw Sir Launcelot, and so did the damosel. And then he bade his dwarf stert upon Sir Kay's horse, and so he did. By that Sir Launcelot was come, then he proffered Sir Launcelot to joust; and they came together so fiercely that either bare other to the earth. Then Launcelot arose and helped him from his horse. And then Beaumains threw away his shield, and proffered to fight with Sir Launcelot on foot; and so they rashed together like boars; and Sir Launcelot felt him so big that he marvelled of his strength, for he fought more like a giant than a knight, and that his fighting was durable and passing perilous. For Sir Launcelot had so much ado with him that he dreaded himself to be shamed, and said, Beaumains, fight not so sore, your quarrel and mine is not so great but we may leave off. Truly that is truth, said Beaumains, but it doth me good to feel your might, and yet, my lord, I showed not the utterance.

In the name of God, said Sir Launcelot, for I promise you, by the faith of my body, I had as much to do as I might to save myself from you unshamed, and therefore have ye no doubt of none earthly knight. Hope ye so that I may any while stand a proved knight? said Beaumains. Yea, said Launcelot, do as ye have done, and I shall be your warrant. Then I pray you, said Beaumains, give me the order of knighthood. Then must ye tell me your name, said Launcelot, and of what kin ye be born. Sir, so that ye will not discover

ne I shall, said Beaumains. Nay, said Sir Launcelot, nd that I promise you by the faith of my body, until t be openly known. Then, sir, he said, my name is Gareth, and brother unto Sir Gawaine of father and nother. Ah, sir, said Sir Launcelot, I am more gladder of you than I was; for ever me thought that ye came not to the court neither for meat nor for drink. And then Sir Launcelot gave him the order of knighthood, and hen Sir Gareth prayed him for to depart and let im go.

So Sir Launcelot departed, and came to Sir Kay, and nade him to be borne home upon his shield, and so ne was healed hard with the life. And so leave we Sir Kay and turn we unto Beaumains.

When he had overtaken the damosel, anon she said, What dost thou here? thou stinketh all of the kitchen; weenest thou that I allow thee, for yonder knight that hou killest. Nay truly, for thou slewest him unhappily nd cowardly; therefore turn again, bawdy kitchen page, I know thee well, for Sir Kay named thee Beaumains. What art thou but a lusk and a turner of roaches and a ladle-washer? Damosel, said Beaumains, ay to me what you will, I will not go from you what-omever ye say, for I have undertaken to King Arthur or to achieve your adventure, and so I shall finish to he end, either I shall die therefore. And when he ame nigh her she bade him ride from her. For thou mellest all of the kitchen; weenest thou that I have oy of thee, for all this deed that thou hast done is but nishapped thee: but thou shalt see a sight shall make hee turn again, and that lightly. And so they rode

on their way until they came to a great forest. And there was a great river and but one passage, and there were ready two knights on the farther side to let them the passage. What sayest thou, said the damosel, wilt thou match yonder knights or turn again? Nay, said Beaumains, I will not turn again an they were six more. And therewithal he rushed into the water, and in midst of the water either brake their spears upon other, and then they drew their swords, and smote eagerly at other. And at the last Sir Beaumains smote the other upon the helm that his head stonied, and therewithal he fell down in the water, and there was he drowned. And then Sir Beaumains spurred his horse upon the land, where the other knight fell upon him, and brake his spear, and so they drew their swords, and fought long together. At the last Sir Beaumains clave his helm and his head down to his shoulders: and so he rode unto the damosel and bade her ride forth on her way.

Alas, she said, that ever a kitchen page should have that fortune to destroy such two doughty knights; thou weenest thou hast done doughtily, that is not so: for the first knight his horse stumbled, and there he was drowned in the water. And the last knight by mishap thou camest behind him and mishappily thou slew him.

Damosel, said Beaumains, ye may say what ye will, but with whomsomever I have ado withal, I trust to God to serve him or he depart. Fie, foul kitchen knave, thou shalt see knights that shall abate thy boast. Fair damosel give me goodly language, and then my care

is past, for what knights somever they be, I care not, nor I doubt them not. Also, said she, I say it for thine avail, yet mayest thou turn again with thy worship; for an thou follow me, thou art but slain, for all that ever thou dost is but by misadventure, and not by prowess. Well, damosel, ye may say what you will, but wheresomever ye go I will follow you. So this Beaumains rode with that lady till evensong time, and ever she chid him, and would not rest. And they came to a black laund: and there was a black hawthorn, and thereon hung a black banner, and on the other side hung a black shield, and by it stood a black spear great and long, and a great black horse covered with silk, and a black stone fast by.

There sat a knight all armed in black harness, and his name was the Knight of the Black Launds. Then the damosel bade Beaumains flee down that valley, for the knight's horse was not saddled. Gramercy, said Beaumains, for always ye would have me a coward. With that the Black Knight, when she came nigh him, spake and said, Damosel, have ye brought this knight of King Arthur to be your champion? Nay, fair knight, said she, this is but a kitchen knave that was fed in King Arthur's kitchen for alms. Why cometh he, said the knight, in such array? it is shame that he beareth you company. Sir, I cannot be delivered of him, said she; would that ye should put him from me, other to slay him an ye may, for he is an unhappy knave and unhappily he hath done this day: through mishap I saw him slay two knights at the passage of the water. That marvelleth me, said the Black Knight, that any

man that is of worship will have ado with him. They know him not, said the damosel, and for because he rideth with me, they ween that he be some man of worship born. That may be, said the Black Knight; howbeit as ye say he be no man of worship, he is a full likely person, and full like to be a strong man: but thus much I grant you, I shall put him down upon one foot, and his horse and harness he shall leave with me, for it were shame to me to do him any more harm.

Then said Sir Beaumains, Sir knight, thou art full large of my horse and my harness; I let thee wit it cost thee nought, and whether it liketh thee or not, this laund will I pass maugre thine head. And horse nor harness gettest thou none of mine, but if thou win them with thy hands; and therefore let see what thou canst do. Sayest thou that? said the Black Knight, now yield thy lady from thee, for it beseemeth never a kitchen page to ride with such a lady. Thou liest, said Beamains, I am a gentleman born, and of more high lineage than thou, and that will I prove on thy body.

Then in great wrath they departed with their horses, and came together as it had been thunder, and the Black Knight's spear brake, and Beaumains thrust him through both his sides, and therewith the spear brake, and the truncheon left still in his side. But nevertheless the Black Knight drew his sword, and smote many eager strokes, and hurt Beaumains full sore. But at the last the Black Knight fell down off his horse in swoon, and there he died. And when Beaumains saw him so well horsed and armed, then he alighted

down and armed him in his armour, and so took his horse and rode after the damosel.

When she saw him come nigh, she said, Away, kitchen knave, out of the wind, for the smell of thy bawdy clothes grieveth me. Alas, that ever such a knave should by mishap slay so good a knight. But hereby is one shall pay thee all thy payment, and therefore I counsel thee, flee. Ever ye say that they will kill me or beat me, said Beaumains, but howsomever I escape, and they lie on the ground.

Thus as they rode together they saw a knight come driving by them all in green; and when he came nigh the damosel, he asked her, Is that my brother the Black Knight that ye have brought with you? Nay, she said, this unhappy kitchen knave hath slain your brother through unhappiness. Alas, said the Green Knight, that is great pity, that so noble a knight as he was should so unhappily be slain. Ah! traitor, thou shalt die for slaying of my brother. I defy thee, said Beaumains, for I let thee wit I slew him knightly and not shamefully.

Therewithal the Green Knight rode unto a horn that was green, and it hung upon a thorn, and there he blew three deadly notes, and there came two damosel and armed him lightly. And then he took a great horse, and a green shield and spear. And then they ran together and brake their spears unto their hands. And then they drew their swords and either wounded other full ill. With that came the damosel, and said, My lord, the Green Knight, why for shame, fight ye so long with the kitchen knave? Alas, it is shame that ever ye were

made knight, to see such a lad to match such a knight, as the weed overgrew the corn. Therewith the Green Knight was ashamed, and therewithal he gave a great stroke of might and clave his shield through. When Beaumains saw his shield cloven he was a little ashamed of that stroke and of her language; and then he gave him such a buffet upon the helm that he fell down; and so suddenly Beaumains pulled him upon the ground grovelling. And then the Green Knight cried him mercy, and yielded him, and prayed him not to slay him. All is vain, said Beaumains, for thou shalt die but if this damosel that came with me pray me to save thy life. And therewithal he unlaced his helm like as he would slay him. Fie upon thee false kitchen page, I will never pray thee to save his life, for I will never be so much in thy danger. Then shall he die, said Beaumains. Not so hardy, thou bawdy knave, said the damosel, that thou slay him. Alas, said the Green Knight, suffer me not to die for a fair word may save me. Fair knight, save my life, and I will forgive thee the death of my brother, and for ever to become thy man, and thirty knights that hold of me for ever shall do you service. In the devil's name, said the damosel, that such a bawdy knave should have thee and thirty knights' service.

Sir knight, said Beaumains, all this availeth thee not, but if my damosel speak with me for thy life. And therewithal he made semblant to slay him. Let be, said the damosel, thou bawdy knave; slay him not, for an thou do thou shall repent it. Damosel, said Beaumains, you charge is to me a pleasure, and at your

commandment his life shall be saved. Then he said, Sir knight with the green arms, I release thee quit at this damosel's request, for I will fulfil all that she chargeth me. And then the Green Knight kneeled down, and did him homage with his sword. Then said the damosel, Me repenteth, Green Knight, of your damage and of your brother's death, for of your help I had great need, for I dread me sore to pass this forest. Nay, dread you not, said the Green Knight, for ye shall lodge with me this night, and to-morn I shall help help you through the forest. So they took their horses and rode to his manor, which was fast there beside.

And ever she rebuked Beaumains, and would not suffer him to sit at her table, but as the Green Knight took him and sat him at a side table. Marvel me-thinketh, said the Green Knight to the damosel, why ye rebuke this noble knight, and I know no knight is able to match him; therefore ye do great wrong to rebuke him, for he shall do you right good service. Fie, fie, said the damosel, it is shame for you to say of him such worship.

And so on the morn they all arose, and heard their mass and brake their fast; and then they took their horses and rode on their way, and the Green Knight conveyed them through the forest; and there the Green Knight said, My lord Beaumains, I and these thirty knights shall be always at your summons, both early and late, at your calling and whither that ever ye will send us. It is well said, said Beaumains, when I call upon you ye must yield you unto King Arthur, and all your knights. If that ye so command us, we

shall be ready at all times, said the Green Knight. Fie, upon thee, in the devil's name, said the damosel, that any good knights should be obedient unto a kitchen knave. So then departed the Green Knight. And then she said unto Beaumains, why followest thou me, thou kitchen boy? Cast away thy shield and they spear, and flee away, yet I counsel thee betimes; for wert thou as wight as ever was Launcelot, Tristram, or the good knight Sir Lamorak, thou should not pass a pass here is called the Pass Perilous. Damosel, said Beaumains, who is afeard let him flee. Well, said the damosel, ye shall soon, whether ye will or not.

Then anon they were ware where was afore them a city rich and fair. And betwixt them and the city a mile and a half there was a fair meadow that seemed new mown, and therein were many pavilions fair to behold. Lo, said the damosel, yonder is a lord that owneth yonder city, and his custom is, when the weather is fair, to lie in this meadow to joust and tourney. And ever there be about him an hundred knights and gentlemen of arms, and there be all manner of arms, and there be all manner of games that any gentleman can devise. That goodly lord, said Beaumains, would I fain see. Thou shalt see him time enough, said the damosel, and so as she rode near she espied the pavilion where he was. Lo, said she, seest thou yonder pavilion that is all of the colour of Inde, and all manner of thing that there is about, men and women, and horses trapped, shields and spears were all of the colour of Inde, and his name is Sir Persant of Inde, the most lordliest knight that ever thou lookedst on. It may well be, said

Beaumains, but be he never so stout a knight, in this field I shall abide till that I see him under his shields. Ah, fool, said she, thou wert better flee betimes. Why, said Beaumains, an he be such a knight as ye make him, he will not set upon me with all his men, or with his hundred knights. For an there come no more but one at once, I shall not fail him while my life lasteth. Fie, said the damosel, that ever such a stinking knave should blow such a boast. Damosel, he said, ye are to blame so to rebuke me, for I had liefer do five battles than so to be rebuked.

Sir, she said, I marvel what thou art and of what kin thou art come; boldly thou speakest and boldly thou hast done, that have I seen; therefore I pray thee save thyself an thou mayest, for all perilous passages we are passed save all only this passage, and there I dread me sore lest ye shall catch some hurt; therefore I would ye were hence. that ye were not bruised nor hurt with this strong knight. But I let you wit this Sir Persant of Inde is nothing of might nor strength unto the knight that laid the siege about my lady. As for that, said Sir Beaumains, be it as it may. For sithen I am come so nigh this knight I will prove his might or I depart from him. And therefore, damosel, have ye no doubt by the grace of God I shall so deal with this knight that within two hours after noon I shall deliver him. And then shall we come to the siege by daylight. O Jesu, marvel have I, said the damosel, what manner a man ye be, for it may never be otherwise but that ye come of a noble blood, for so foul nor shamefully did never woman rule a knight

as I have done you, and ever courteously ye have suffered me.

Damosel, said Beaumains, a knight may little do that may not suffer a damosel, for whatsomever ye said unto me I took none heed of your words, for the more ye said the more ye angered me, and my wrath I wreaked upon them that I had ado withal. And therefore all the missaying that ye missaid me furthered me in my battle, and caused me to think to show and prove myself at the end what I was; for peradventure though I had meat and drink in King Arthur's kitchen, yet I might have had meat enough in other places, but all that I did it for to prove and assay my friends, and that shall be known another day; and whether that I be a gentleman born or none, I let you wit, fair damosel, I have done you gentleman's service, and peradventure better service yet will I do or I depart from you. Alas, she said, fair Beaumains, forgive me all that I have missaid or done, against thee. With all my heart, said he, I forgive it you; and damosel, since it liketh you to say thus fair unto me, wit ye well it gladdeth my heart greatly, and now meseemeth there is no knight living but I am able enough for him.

With this Sir Persant of Inde had espied them as they hoved in the field, and knightly he sent to them whether he came in peace or in war. Say to thy lord, said Beaumains, I take no force, but whether as him list himself. So the messenger went again unto Sir Persant and told him all his answer. Well then will I have ado with him to the utterance, and so he purveyed him and rode against him. And there they met

with all that ever their horses might run, and brast their spears either in three pieces, and their horses rush so together that both their horses fell dead to the earth ; and lightly they avoided their horses and put their shields afore them, and drew their swords, and gave many great strokes that sometimes they hurtled together that they fell grovelling on the ground. And at the last Beaumains smote Sir Persant above the helm, that he fell grovelling to the earth ; and then he leapt upon him overthwart and unlaced his helm to have slain him.

Then Sir Persant yielded him and asked him mercy. With that came the damosel and prayed to save his life. I will well, for it were pity this noble knight should die. Gramercy, said Persant, gentle knight and damosel. For certainly now I wot well it was ye that slew my brother the Black Knight at the black thorn. Also I am sure that ye are he that won mine other brother the Green Knight. And now this shall I do for to please you ; ye shall have homage and fealty of me, and a hundred knights to be always at your command. And so they went unto Sir Persant's pavilion and drank the wine and ate spices, and afterward Sir Persant made him to rest upon a bed until supper time, and after supper to bed again.

And so on the morn the damosel and Sir Beaumains heard mass and brake their fast, and so took their leave. Fair damosel, said Persant, whitherward are ye wayleading this knight ? Sir, she said, this knight is going to the siege that besiegeth my sister in the Castle Dangerous. Ah, said Persant, that is the Knight of the Red Laund, the which is the most perilous knight that

I know now living, and a man that is without mercy, and men say he hath seven men's strength. God you save from that knight, for he doth great wrong to that lady, and that is great pity, for she is one of the fairest ladies of the world, and meseemeth that your damosel is her sister: is not your name Linet? Yea sir, said she, and my lady my sister's name is Dame Lionesse. And now my lord Sir Persant of Inde, I require you that you will make this gentleman knight or ever he fight with the Red Knight. I will with all my heart, said he, an it pleases him to take the order of knighthood of so simple a man as I am. Sir, said Beaumains, I thank you, but I am better sped, for certainly the noble knight Sir Launcelot made me knight. Ah, said Sir Persant, of a more renowned knight might ye not be made knight; for of all knights he may be called chief of knighthood; and so all the world saith, that betwixt three knights is departed clearly knighthood, that is Launcelot du Lake, Sir Tristram de Liones, and Sir Lamorak de Galis: these bear now the renown. Therefore God speed you well, for an ye may match the Red Knight ye shall be called the forth of the world.

Sir, said Beaumains, I would fane be of good fame and of knighthood. And I let you wit I came of good men, and so you will keep it in close, and this damosel, I will tell you of what kin I am. We will not discover you, said they both. Truly then, said he, my name is Gareth of Orkney, and King Lot was my father, and my mother is King Arthur's sister, her name is Dame Morgawse, and Sir Gawaine is my brother, and Sir Agravaine, and Sir Gaheris, and I am the youngest of

them all. And yet wot not King Arthur nor Sir Gawaine what I am.

So the book saith that the lady that was besieged had word of her sister's coming by the dwarf, and a knight with her. What manner a man is he? said the lady. He is a noble knight, truly madam, said the dwarf, and but a young man, but he is as likely a man as ever ye saw any. What is he, said the damosel, and of what kin is he come, and of whom was he made knight? Madam, said the dwarf, he is the king's son of Orkney, and wit ye well of Sir Launcelot was he made knight.

Dwarf, said the lady, I am glad of these tidings, therefore go thou in an hermitage of mine hereby, and there shalt thou bear with thee of my wine in two flagons of silver, and also two cast of bread with fat venison baked, and dainty fowls; and a cup of gold here I deliver thee, that is rich and precious; and bear all this to mine hermitage, and put it in the hermit's hands. And sithen go thou to my sister and greet her well, and commend me to the gentle knight, and pray him to eat and drink and make him strong, and say ye him I thank him of his courtesy and goodness, that he would take upon him such labour for me that never did him bounty nor courtesy. Also pray him that he be of good heart and courage, for he shall meet with a full noble knight, but he is neither of bounty, courtesy, nor gentleness, and that is the cause I cannot praise him nor love him.

So this dwarf departed, and came to Sir Persant, where he found the damosel Linet and Sir Beaumains,

and there he told them all as ye have heard; and then they took their leave, but Sir Persant took an ambling hackney and conveyed them on their ways, and then beleft them to God; and so within a little while they came to that hermitage, and there they drank the wine, and ate the venison and the fowls baken.

Upon the morn Beaumains and the damosel Linet heard their mass and brake their fast. And then they took their horses and came to a plain, and saw where were many pavilions and tents, and a fair castle, and there was much smoke and great noise; and when they came near the siege Sir Beaumains espied upon great trees as he rode, how there hung full goodly armed knights by the neck, and their shields about their necks with their swords, and gilt spurs upon their heels, and so there hung nigh a forty knights shamefully with full rich arms.

Then Sir Beaumains abated his countenance and said, What meaneth this? Fair sir, said the damosel, abate not your cheer for all this sight, for ye must courage yourself or else ye be all shent, for all these knights came hither to this siege to rescue my sister, and when the Red Knight of the Red Launds had overcome them he put them to this shameful death without mercy or pity. And in the same wise he will serve you, but if you quit you the better.

Now Jesu defend me, said Beaumains, from such a villainous death. For rather than I should be so faren withal, I would be slain manly in plain battle. So were you better, said the damosel, for trust not, in him is no courtesy, but all goeth to the death or shameful

murder, and that is pity, for he is a full noble knight of prowess.

And then they rode to the dykes, and saw them double dyked with full warlike walls; and there was great noise of minstrelsy; and the sea beat upon one side of the walls, where were many ships and mariners' noise with "hale and how." Also there was fast by a sycamore tree, and there hung an horn, the greatest that ever they saw, of an elephant's bone; and this Knight of the Red Launds had hanged it up there, that if there came any errant-knight, he must blow that horn, and then will he make him ready and come to him to do battle. But, sir, I pray you, said Linet, blow ye not the horn till it be high noon, for now it is about prime, and now increaseth his might, that as men say he hath seven men's strength. Ah, fie for shame, fair damosel, say ye never so more to me; for, an he were as good a knight as ever was, I shall never fail him in his most might, for either I will win worship worshipfully, or die knightly in the field. And therewith he blew so the horn eagerly that all the siege and the castle rang thereof. And then there leapt out knights out of their tents and pavilions, and they within the castle looked over the walls and out at windows.

Then the Knight of the Red Launds armed him hastily, and two barons set on his spurs upon his heels, and all was blood-red. And an earl buckled his helm upon his head, and then they brought him a red spear and a red steed, and so he rode into a little vale under the castle, that all that were in the castle and at the siege might behold the battle.

Sir, said Linet unto Sir Beaumains, look ye be glad and light, for yonder is your deadly enemy, and at yonder window is my sister, Dame Lionesse. Where ? said Beaumains. Yonder, said the damosel, and pointed with her finger. That is truth, said Beaumains. She beseemeth afar the fairest lady that ever I looked upon, and truly, I ask no better quarrel than now for to do battle, for truly she shall be my lady, and for her I will fight. And ever he looked up to the window with glad countenance, and the Lady Lionesse made curtsey to him down to the earth, with holding up both their hands.

With that the Red Knight of the Red Launds called to Sir Beaumains, Leave, sir knight, thy looking, and behold me, I counsel thee ; for I warn thee well she is my lady, and for her I have done many strong battles. If thou have so done, said Beaumains, meseemeth it was but waste labour, for she loveth none of thy fellowship, and thou to love that loveth not thee is but great folly. For an I understood that she were not glad of my coming, I would be advised or I did battle for her. But I understand by the besieging of this castle she may forbear thy fellowship. And therefore wit thou well, thou Red Knight of the Red Launds, I love her, and will rescue her, or else die. Sayst thou that ? said the Red Knight, meseemeth thou ought of reason to be ware by yonder knights that thou sawest hang upon yonder trees. Fie for shame, said Beaumains, that ever thou shouldst say or do so evil, for in that thou shamest thyself and knighthood, and thou mayst be sure there will no lady love thee that knowest thy wicked customs. And now

thou weenest that the sight of these hanged knights should fear me. Nay truly, not so; that shameful sight causeth me to have courage and hardiness against thee, more than I would have had against thee an thou wert a well-ruled knight. Make thee ready, said the Red Knight of the Red Launds, and talk no longer with me.

Then Sir Beaumains bade the damosel go from him; and then they put their spears in their rests, and came together with all their might, and either smote other in the midst of their shields that the paitrelles, surcingles, and cruppers brast, and fell to the earth both, and the reins of their bridles in their hands; and so they lay a great while sore astonied. Then they avoided their horses and put their shields afore them, and drew their swords and ran together like two fierce lions.

Thus they fought till it was past noon, and never would stint, till at the last they lacked wind both; and when they had rested them a while they went to battle again. And thus they endured till evensong time, that there was none that beheld them might know whether was like to win the battle; and their armour was so far hewn that men might see their naked sides; and in other places they were naked, but ever the naked places they did defend. And the Red Knight was a wily knight of war, and his wily fighting taught Sir Beaumains to be wise; but he abought it full sore ere he did espy his fighting.

And thus by assent of them both they granted either other to rest; and so they set them down upon two mole hills there beside the fighting place, and either of

them unlaced his helm and took the cold wind. And then when Sir Beaumain's helm was off, he looked up to the window, and there he saw the fair lady Dame Lionesse, and she made him such countenance that his heart waxed light and jolly; and therewith he bade the Red Knight make him ready, and let us do battle to the utterance. I will well, said the knight, and then they laced up their helms and fought freshly; but the Red Knight of the Red Launds awaited him, and at an overthwart smote him within the hand, that his sword fell out of his hands; and yet he gave him another buffet upon the helm that he fell grovelling to the earth, and the Red Knight fell over him, for to hold him down.

Then cried the maiden Linet on high: O Sir Beaumains, where is thy courage become? Alas, my lady my sister beholdeth thee, and she sobbeth and weepeth, that maketh mine heart heavy. When Sir Beaumains heard her say so, he abraid up with a great might and gat him upon his feet, and lightly he leapt to his sword and gripped it in his hand, and doubled his pace unto the Red Knight, and there they fought a new battle together. But Sir Beaumains then doubled his strokes, and smote so thick that he smote the sword out of his hand, and then he smote him upon the helm that he fell to the earth, and Sir Beaumains fell upon him, and unlaced his helm to have slain him and then he yielded him and asked mercy, and said with a loud voice: O noble knight, I yield me to thy mercy.

Then Sir Beaumains bethought him upon the knights that the Red Knight had made to be hanged shamefully, and then he said: I may not with my worship save thy

life, for the shameful deaths that thou hast caused many full good knights to die. Sir, said the Red Knight, hold your hand and ye shall know the causes why I put them to so shameful a death. Say on, said Sir Beaumains. Sir, I loved once a lady, a fair damosel, and she had her brother slain ; and she said it was Sir Launcelot du Lake, or else Sir Gawaine ; and she prayed me as I loved her heartily, that I would make her a promise by the faith of my knighthood, for to labour daily in arms until I met with one of them ; and all that I might overcome I should put them unto a villainous death, and so I ensured her to do all the villainy unto King Arthur's knights, and that I should take vengeance upon all these knights.

Then came there many earls, and barons, and noble knights, and prayed that knight to save his life, and take him to your prisoner. Fair lords, said Beaumains, wit you well I am full loath to slay this knight, nevertheless he has done passing ill and shamefully ; but insomuch all that he did was at a lady's request I blame him the less ; and so for your sake I will release him that he shall have his life upon this covenant, that he go within the castle, and yield him there to the lady, and if she will forgive and quit him, I will well ; with this he make her amends of all the trespass he hath done against her and her lands. And also, when that is done, that ye go unto the court of King Arthur, and there that ye ask Sir Launcelot mercy, and Sir Gawaine, for the evil will ye have had against them. Sir, said the Red Knight, all this will I do as ye command.

And then the maiden Linet came to Sir Beaumains, and unarmed him and searched his wounds, and stinted

his blood, and in likewise she did to the Red Knight of the Red Launds. And there they sojourned ten days in their tents; and the Red Knight made his lords and servants to do all the pleasure that they might unto Sir Beaumains. And so within a while the Red Knight went unto the castle, and put him in her grace. And so she received him upon sufficient surety, so all her hurts were restored of all that she could complain. And then came forth Dame Lionesse arrayed like a princess, and there she made Sir Gareth passing good cheer, and he her again; and they had goodly language and lovely countenance together. And then she let fetch to-fore him Linet, the damosel that had ridden with him many wildsome ways. Then was Sir Gareth more gladder than he was to-fore. And then they troth-plight each other to love and never to fail whiles their life lasteth.

So turn we unto King Arthur, that at the next feast of Pentecost held his feast. And there came the Green Knight with thirty knights, and yielded them all unto King Arthur, and there came Sir Persant of Inde and yielded him to King Arthur and an hundred knights with him. These two brethren told King Arthur how they were overcome by a knight that a damosel had with her, and called him Beaumains. So right as the king stood so talking with these brethren there came Sir Launcelot du Lake and told the king there was come a goodly lord with five hundred knights with him. Then the king went out of Carlion, for there was the feast, and there came to him this lord, and saluted the king in the most goodly manner. Sir, he said, my name is the Red Knight of the Red Launds, and I am sent to you of a

knight that is called Beaumains, for he won me in pleyn battle, and both I and these five hundred knights shall always be at your summons to do you service. Well, my fair lords, said King Arthur, wit you well I shall do you honour for the love of Sir Beaumains. So then the king and they went to meat, and were served in the best manner. And as they sat at the meat, there came in the Queen of Orkney, with ladies and knights a great number. And then Sir Gawaine, Sir Agravaine, and Gaheris arose, and went to her and saluted her upon their knees, and asked her blessing; for in fifteen year they had not seen her. Then she spake on high to her brother King Arthur: Where have ye done my young son Sir Gareth? He was here amongst you a twelvemonth, and ye made a kitchen knave of him, the which is shame to you all. Alas, where have ye done my dear son that was my joy and bliss? O dear mother, said Sir Gawaine, I knew him not. Nor I, said the king, that now me repenteth, but thanked be God he is proved a worshipful knight as is any now living of his years, and I shall never be glad till I may find him.

Ah, brother, said the Queen unto King Arthur, and unto Sir Gawaine, and to all her sons, ye did yourself great shame when ye kept my son in the kitchen and fed him like a poor hog. Fair sister, said King Arthur, ye shall right well wit I knew him not, nor no more did Sir Gawaine, nor his brethren; but sithen it is so, that he is thus gone from us all, we must shape a remedy to find him.

So then goodly letters were made, and a messenger sent forth, that night and day he went till he came unto

the Castle Perilous. And then the lady Dame Lionesse was sent for. And when she understood this message, she bade him ride on his way, and she would come after in all goodly haste.

So Dame Lionesse departed and came to King Arthur, where she was nobly received, and there she was sore questioned of the king and of the Queen of Orkney. And she answered, where Sir Gareth was she could not tell. But thus much she said unto Arthur: Sir, I will let cry a tournament that shall be done before my castle at the Assumption of our Lady, and the cry shall be this: that you, my lord Arthur, shall be there, and your knights, and I will purvey that my knights shall be against yours; and then I am sure ye shall hear of Sir Gareth. This is well advised, said King Arthur; and so she departed. And the king and she made great provision to that tournament.

And so the cry was made in England, Wales, and Scotland, Ireland, Cornwall, and in all the Out Isles, and in Brittany and in many countries; that at the feast of our Lady the Assumption next coming, men should come to the Castle Perilous beside the Isle Avilion; and there all the knights that there came should have the choice whether them list to be on the one party with the knights of the castle, or on the other party with King Arthur. And so there came many good knights that were at their large, and held them for the most part against King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table and came on the side of them of the castle.

And then Sir Gareth prayed Dame Lionesse and the Red Knight of the Red Launds, and his brother, and

Sir Gringamore, that in no wise there should none of them tell not his name, and make no more of him than of the least knight that there was. For, he said, I will not be known of neither more nor less, neither at the beginning neither at the ending. Then Dame Lionesse said unto Sir Gareth: Sir, I will lend you a ring, but I would pray you as you love me heartily let me have it again when the tournament is done, for that ring increaseth my beauty much more than it is of itself. And the virtue of my ring is that, that is green it will turn to red, and that is red it will turn in likeness to green, and that is blue it will turn to likeness of white, and that is white it will turn in likeness to blue, and so it will do of all manner of colours. Also who that beareth my ring shall lose no blood, and for great love I will give you this ring. Gramercy, said Sir Gareth, mine own lady, for this ring is passing meet for me, for it will turn all manner of likeness that I am in, and that shall cause me that I shall not be known.

And upon the Assumption Day, when mass and matins were done, there were heralds with trumpets commanded to blow to the field. So they dressed them to the range and Sir Gareth did great deeds of arms.

When King Angwisance of Ireland saw Sir Gareth fare so, he marvelled what he might be that one time seemed green, and another time blue. And thus at every course that he rode to an fro he changed his colour, so that there might neither king nor knight have ready cognisance of him. Then the King of Ireland encountered with Sir Gareth, and there Sir Gareth smote him from his horse, saddle and all. And then came King

Carados of Scotland, and Sir Gareth smote him down horse and man. And in the same wise he served King Uriens of the land of Gore. And then Sir Galahault, the noble prince, cried on high: Knight with the many colours, well hast thou jousted; now make thee ready that I may joust with thee. Sir Gareth heard him, and so they encountered together, and there the prince brake his spear; but Sir Gareth smote him on the left side of the helm so that he reeled here and there, and he had fallen down had not his men recovered him.

That same knight with the many colours is a good knight, said King Arthur. Wherefore the king called unto him Sir Launcelot, and prayed him to encounter with that knight. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, I may well find in my heart to forbear him as at this time, for he hath had travail enough this day. And peradventure his quarrel is here this day, and peradventure he is best beloved with this lady of all that be here; for I see well he paineth him and enforceth him to do great deeds, and therefore, as for me, this day he shall have the honour; though it lay in my power to put him from it I would not.

Then Sir Gareth rode out on the one side to amend his helm; and then said his dwarf: Give me your ring, that ye lose it not while that ye drink. And so when he had drunk he gat on his helm, and eagerly rode into the field, and left his ring with his dwarf; and the dwarf was glad the ring was from him, for then he wist well he should be known. And then when Sir Gareth was in the field all folks saw him well and plainly that he was in yellow colours; and there he rased off helms and pulled down knights, that King Arthur had marvel what

knight he was, for the king saw by his hair that it was the same knight. But before he was in so many colours, and now he is but in one colour. Now go, said King Arthur unto divers heralds, and ride about him, and espy what manner knight he is, for I have spered of many knights this day that be upon his party, and all say they know him not. And so an herald rode nigh Gareth as he could ; and there he saw written on his helm in gold, This helm is Sir Gareth of Orkney. Then the herald cried as he were wood, and many heralds with him :— This is Sir Gareth of Orkney in the yellow arms ; whereby all kings and knights of Arthur's beheld him and awaited ; and then they pressed all to behold him, and ever the heralds cried : This is Sir Gareth of Orkney, King Lot's son. And when Sir Gareth espied that he was discovered, then with great pain he gat out of the press, and there he met with his dwarf. O boy, said Sir Gareth, thou hast beguiled me foul this day that thou kept my ring : give it me anon again, that I may hide my body withal ; and so he took it him. And then they all wist not where he was become ; and Sir Gawaine had in manner espied where Sir Gareth rode, and then he rode after with all his might. That espied Sir Gareth, and rode lightly into the forest, that Sir Gawaine wist not where he was become. And then fell there a thunder and a rain, as heaven and earth should go together. And Sir Gareth was not a little weary, and rode up into a mountain to repose him ; and there he saw an armed knight coming towards him. Then Sir Gareth took his shield, and mounted upon horseback, and so without biding they ran together as it had been thunder. And there that

knight hurt Sir Gareth under the side with his spear. And then they alighted and drew their swords, and gave great strokes that the blood trailed to the ground. And so they fought two hours.

At the last there came the damosel Linet riding upon an ambling mule; and there she cried on all high, Sir Sir Gawaine, Sir Gawaine, leave thy fighting with thy brother Sir Gareth. And when he heard her say so he threw away his shield and his sword, and ran to Sir Gareth, and took him in his arms, and asked him mercy. What are ye, said Sir Gareth, that right now were so strong and so mighty, and now so suddenly yield you to me? O Gareth, I am your brother Sir Gawaine, that for your sake have had great sorrow and labour. Then Sir Gareth unlaced his helm, and kneeled down to him, and asked him mercy. Then they rose both, and embraced either other in their arms, and either of them gave other the prize of the battle. And there were many kind words between them. Then came the damosel that was the Lady Linet, that rode with Sir Gareth so long, and there she did staunch Sir Gareth's wounds and Sir Gawaine's. Now what will ye do? said the damosel; meseemeth that it were well done that Arthur had witting of you both, for your horses are so bruised that they may not bear. Now fair damosel, said Sir Gawaine, I pray you ride unto my lord mine uncle, King Arthur, and tell him what adventure is betid me here, and I suppose he will not tarry long. Then she took her mule, and lightly she came to King Arthur that was but two mile hence. And when she had told him tidings the king bade get him a palfrey. And when he

was upon his back he bade lords and ladies come after, who that would; and there was saddling and bridling of queens' horses and princes' horses, and well was him that soonest might be ready.

So when the king came thereas they were, he saw Sir Gawaine and Sir Gareth sit upon a little hill-side, and then the king avoided his horse. Wit ye well the king made great joy, and many a piteous complaint he made to Sir Gareth, and ever he wept as he had been a child. With that came his mother, the Queen of Orkney, Dame Morgawse, and when she saw Sir Gareth readily in the visage she might not weep, but suddenly fell down in a swoon, and lay there a great while like as she had been dead. And then Sir Gareth recomforted his mother in such wise that she recovered and made good cheer.

Then said King Arthur unto the damosel Linet: I marvel that your sister Dame Lionesse, cometh not to visit her knight, my nephew Sir Gareth, that hath had so much travail for her love. My lord, said the damosel Linet, ye must of your good grace hold her excused, for she knoweth not that my lord, Sir Gareth, is here. Go then for her, said King Arthur, that we may be appointed what is best to be done, according to the pleasure of my nephew. Sir, said the damosel, that shall be done, and so she rode unto her sister. And so lightly as she might she made her ready; and she came with her brother Sir Gringamore, and with her forty knights. And so when she was come she had all the cheer that might be done, both of the king, and of many other kings and queens.

And among all these ladies she was named the fairest, and peerless. Then the king asked his nephew, Sir

Gareth, whether he would have that lady to his wife. My lord, wit you well that I love her above all ladies living. Now fair lady, said King Arthur, what say ye? Most noble King, said Dame Lionesse, wit you well that my lord, Sir Gareth, is to me more liefer to have and wield as my husband, than any king or prince that is christened; and if I may not have him I promise you I will never have none. For, my lord Arthur, wit ye well he is my first love, and he shall be the last; and if ye will suffer him to have his will and free choice I dare say he will have me. That is truth, said Sir Gareth; an I have not you and wield not you as my wife, there shall never lady nor gentlewoman rejoice me. What, nephew, said the king, is the wind in that door? for wit you well I would not for the stint of my crown to be causer to withdraw your hearts; and wit ye well ye cannot love so well but I shall rather increase it than distress it. And also ye shall have my love and my lordship in the uttermost wise that may lie in my power. And in the same wise said Sir Gareth's mother.

Then there was made a provision for the day of marriage; and by the king's advice it was provided that it should be at Michaelmas following, at Kink Kenadon by the sea, for there is a plentiful country. And so it was cried in all the places through the realm. And then Sir Gareth sent his summons to all these knights that he had won in battle to-fore, that they should be at his day of marriage at Kink Kenadon by the sands. And then Dame Lionesse, and the damosel Linet with Sir Gringamore, rode to their castle; and a goodly and a rich ring she gave to Sir Gareth, and he gave her another.

And King Arthur gave her a rich pair of beads of gold; and so she departed: and King Arthur and his fellowship rode towards Kink Kenadon, and Sir Gareth brought his lady on the way, and so came to the king again and rode with him. Lord! the great cheer that Sir Launcelot made of Sir Gareth and he of him, for there was never no knight that Sir Gareth loved so well as he did Sir Launcelot; and ever for the most part he would be in Sir Launcelot's company; for after Sir Gareth had espied Sir Gawaine's conditions, he withdrew him from his brother, Sir Gawaine's fellowship, for he was vengeable, and where he hated he would be avenged with murder, and that hated Sir Gareth.

So it drew fast to Michaelmas; and thither came Dame Lionesse, the lady of the Castle Perilous, and her sister, Dame Linet, with Sir Gringamore, her brother, with them. And there were they lodged at the device of King Arthur. And upon Michaelmas Day the Bishop of Canterbury made the wedding betwixt Sir Gareth and the Lady Lionesse with great solemnity. And King Arthur made Sir Gaheris to wed Dame Linet.

So then the kings and queens, princes and earls, barons and many bold knights, went unto meat; and well may ye wit there were all manner of meat plenteously, all manner revels and games, with all manner of minstrelsy that was used in those days. Also there was great jousts three days. But the king would not suffer Sir Gareth to joust, because of his new bride; for, as the French book saith, that Dame Lionesse desired of the king that none that were wedded should joust at that feast. So they held the court forty days with great solemnity.

And this Sir Gareth was a noble knight, and a well-ruled, and fair-languaged, and he was gentle, courteous, true, and bounteous, meek, and mild, and in him was no manner of mal engin, but plain, faithful, and true. And Dame Lionesse was a full fair lady, and mighty lands with great riches gave unto them King Arthur, that royally they might live till their lives' end.

I WILL NOT DEPART TILL I HAVE ON THIS EARTH MADE A TOMB FOR THESE LOVERS

V

COLOMBE

For her sake I shall owe all wymmen the better love

SO it befell that Sir Lanceor, knight of Ireland, armed him at all points, and dressed his shield on his shoulder, and mounted upon horseback, and took his spear in his hand, and rode after Sir Balin le Savage a great pace as much as his horse might go ; and within a little space on a mountain he had sight of Balin, and with a loud voice he cried, Abide, knight, for ye shall abide whether ye will or nill, and the shield that is to-fore you shall not help. When Balin heard the noise he turned his horse fiercely, and said, Fair knight,

what will ye, will ye joust with me ? Yea, said the Irish knight, therefore come I after you. Peradventure, said Balin, it were better to have holden you at home, for many a man weeneth to put his enemy to a rebuke, and oft it falleth to himself. Of what court be ye sent from ? said Balin. I am come from the court of King Arthur, said the knight of Ireland, that come hither for to revenge the despite ye did this day to King Arthur and to his court. Well, said Balin, I see well I must have ado with you, that me forthinketh for to grieve King Arthur, or any of his court ; and your quarrel is full simple unto me, for the lady that is dead did me great damage, for she was causer that my mother was burnt, through her falsehood and treachery, and else would I have been loath as any knight that liveth for to slay a lady. Make you ready, said the knight Lanceor, and dress you unto me, for that one shall abide in the field. Then they came together as much as their horses might drive, and the Irish knight smote Balin on the shield, and all went shivers of his spear, and Balin hit him through the shield, and the haubeck perished, and so pierced through his body and the horse's croup, and anon turned his horse fiercely, and drew out his sword, and wist not that he had slain him ; and then he saw him lie as a dead corpse.

Then he looked by him, and was ware of a damosel that came riding full fast on a fair palfrey. And when she espied that Lanceor was slain, she made sorrow out of measure, and said, O Balin, two bodies thou hast slain and one heart, and two hearts in one body, and two souls thou has lost. And therewith she took the sword from her love that lay dead, and fell to the ground in a swoon.

And when she arose she made great dole out of measure, the which sorrow grieved Balin passingly sore, and he went unto her for to have taken the sword out of her hand, but she held it so fast he might not take it out of her hand unless he should have hurt her, and suddenly she set the pommel to the ground, and rove herself through the body. When Balin espied her deeds he was passing heavy in his heart, and ashamed that so fair a damosel had destroyed herself for the love of his death. Alas, said Balin, me repenteth sore the death of this knight, for the love of this damosel, for there was much true love betwixt them both, and for sorrow might not longer behold him, but turned his horse and looked towards a great forest, and there he was ware, by the arms, of his brother Balan. And when they were met they put off their helms and kissed together, and wept for joy and pity. Then Balan said, I little weened to have met with you at this sudden adventure; for a man told me, in the castle of Four Stones, that he had seen you in the court of King Arthur, and therefore I came hither into this country, for here I supposed to find you. Anon the knight Balin told his brother how he had slain that Lady of the Lake that had slain Balin's mother, and how King Arthur was displeased with him. Wherefore he sent this knight after me, that lieth here dead, and the death of this damosel grieveth me sore. So doth it me, said Balin, but ye must take the adventure that God will ordain you. Truly, said Balin, I am right heavy that my Lord Arthur is displeased with me, for he is the most worshipful knight that reigneth now on earth.

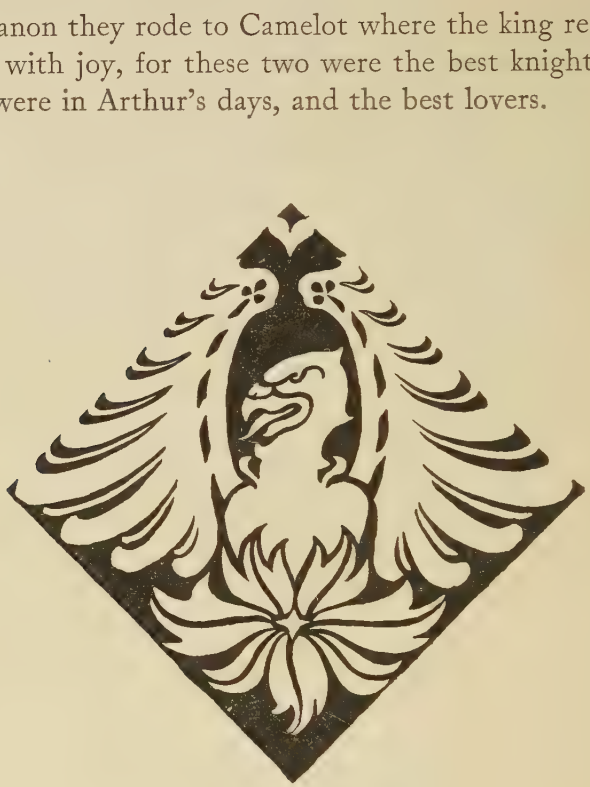
Now go we hence, said Balin, and well be we met. The meanwhile as they talked, there came a dwarf from the city of Camelot on horseback, as much as he might, and found the dead bodies, wherefore he made great dole, and pulled out his hair for sorrow, and said, Which of you knights have done this deed? It was I, said Balin, that slew this knight in my defence, for hither he came to chase me, and either I must slay him or he me; and this damosel slew herself for his love, which repenteth me, and for her sake I shall owe all women the better love. Alas, said the dwarf, thou hast done great damage unto thyself, for this knight that is here dead was one of the most valiantest men that lived, and trust well, Balin, his kin will chase you through the world till they have slain you. As for that, said Balin, I fear not greatly, but I am right heavy that I have displeased my lord King Arthur, for the death of this knight. So as they talked together, there came a king of Cornwall riding, the which hight King Mark. And when he saw these two bodies dead, and understood how they were dead, then made the king great sorrow for the true love that was betwixt them, and said, I will not depart till I have on this earth made a tomb for these lovers, and there he pight his pavilions and sought through all the country to find a tomb, and in a church they found one was fair and rich, and then the king let put them both in the earth, and put the tomb upon them, and wrote the names of them both on the tomb. How here lieth Lanceor the king's son of Ireland, that was slain by the hands of Balin; and how his lady, Colombe, slew herself with her love's sword for dole and sorrow.

The meanwhile as this was doing, in came Merlin. Then said Merlin to Balin, Thou hast done thyself great hurt, because thou savest not this lady that slew herself, that might have saved her an thou wouldest. By the faith of my body, said Balin, I might not save her, for she slew herself suddenly. Me repenteth, said Merlin; because of the death of this lady thou shalt strike a stroke most dolorous that ever man struck, except the stroke of our Lord, for thou shalt hurt the truest knight and the man of most worship that now liveth, and through that stroke three kingdoms shall be in great poverty, misery and wretchedness twelve year, and the knight shall not be whole of that wound for many years. Then said Merlin to King Mark, Here shall be in this same place the greatest battle betwixt two knights that was or ever shall be, and the truest lovers, and yet none of them shall slay other, and there Merlin wrote their names on the tomb with letters of gold that should fight in that place, whose names were Launcelot du Lake, and Tristram de Lionesse.

And it befell as Merlin prophesied that these two knights met by adventure at that tomb. And they struck together with bright swords, as men that were of might, and either wounded other passingly sore. And their squires stood and wept both when they saw the bright swords over-covered with the blood of their bodies.

Then spake Sir Tristram and said: Knight, thou fightest wonderly well, therefore an it please you, tell me your name. Sir, said he, my name is Launcelot du Lake. Alas, said Sir Tristram, what have I done! for

ye are the man in the world that I love best, and my name is Tristram de Liones. Then they took off their helms and either kissed other an hundred times. And then anon they rode to Camelot where the king received them with joy, for these two were the best knights that ever were in Arthur's days, and the best lovers.



BUT THE SORROW THAT THE KING MADE FOR HIS QUEEN THAT MIGHT NO TONGUE TELL

VI

TWO QUEENS OF LIONES

Here came by him two queues of grete estate

IT was a king that hight Meliodas, and he was lord and king of the country of Liones, and this Meliodas was a likely knight as any was that time living. And by fortune he wedded King Mark's sister of Cornwall, and she was called Elizabeth, that was called both good and fair. And at that time King Arthur reigned, and he was whole king of England, Wales, and Scotland. Howbeit there were many kings that were lords of many countries, for in Wales were two kings, and in the north

were many kings ; and in Cornwall and in the west were two kings, but all they held their lands of King Arthur.

And this Elizabeth was a full meek lady, and well she loved her lord, and he her again, so when the time came that she should bear a child, there was great joy betwixt them. Then there was a lady in that country that had loved King Meliodas long, and by no means could she never get his love ; and therefore she let ordain upon a day, as King Meliodas rode a-hunting, for he was a great chaser, and there by an enchantment she made him chase an hart by himself alone till that he came to an old castle, and there anon he was taken prisoner by the lady that him loved. When Elizabeth, King Meliodas' wife, missed her lord, she was nigh out of her wit, and as near her time as she was, she took a gentlewoman with her and ran into the forest to seek her lord. And when she was far in the forest she might no farther for she began to travail fast of her child ; and so by miracle of Our Lady of Heaven she was delivered with great pains. But she had taken such cold for the default of help that deep draughts of death took her, that needs she must die and depart out of this world ; there was none other bote.

And when this Queen Elizabeth saw that there was none other bote, then she made great dole, and said unto her gentlewoman : When ye see my lord, King Meliodas, recommend me unto him, and tell him what pains I endure here for his love, and how I must die here for his sake for default of good help ; and let him wit that I am full sorry to depart out of this world from him, therefore pray him to be friend to my soul. Now let

me see my little child for whom I have had all this sorrow. And when she saw him she said thus: Ah, my little son, thou hast murdered thy mother, and therefore I suppose, thou that art a murderer so young, thou art full likely to be a manly man in thine age. And because I shall die of the birth of thee, I charge thee, gentlewoman, that thou pray my lord, King Meliodas, that when he is christened let call him Tristram, that is as much to say as a sorrowful birth. And therewith this queen gave up the ghost and died. And the gentlewoman laid her under an umbre of a great tree, and then she lapped the child as well as she might for cold. Right so there came the barons following after the queen, and when they saw that she was dead, and understood none other but the king was destroyed, then certain of them would have slain the child, because they would have been lords of the country of Liones.

But then through the fair speech of the gentlewoman, and by the means that she made, the most part of the barons would not assent thereto. And then they let carry home the dead queen, and much dole was made for her.

Then this meanwhile Merlin delivered King Meliodas out of prison on the morn after his queen was dead. And so when the king came home the most part of the barons made great joy. But the sorrow that the king made for his queen that might no tongue tell. So then the king let inter her richly, and after he let christen his child as his wife had commanded afore her death. Then the King Meliodas endured seven years without a wife, and all this time Tristram was nourished well.

Then it befell that King Meliodas wedded King Howell's daughter of Brittany, and anon she had children of King Meliodas: then was she heavy and wroth that her children should not rejoice the country of Liones, wherefore this queen ordained for to poison young Tristram. So she let poison be put in a piece of silver in the chamber whereas Tristram and her children were together, unto that intent that when Tristram was thirsty he should drink that drink. And so it fell upon a day, the queen's son, as he was in that chamber, espied that piece with poison, and he weened it had been good drink, and because the child was thirsty he took the piece with poison and drank freely; and therewithal suddenly the child brast and was dead.

When the queen of Meliodas wist of the death of her son, wit ye well she was heavy. But yet the king understood nothing of her treason. Notwithstanding the queen would not leave this, but eft she let ordain more poison, and put it in a piece. And by fortune King Meliodas, her husband, found the piece with wine where was the poison, and he that was much thirsty took the piece for to drink thereout. And as he would have drunken thereof the queen espied him, and then she ran unto him, and pulled the piece from him suddenly. The king marvelled why she did so, and remembered him how her son was suddenly slain with poison. And then he took her by the hand, and said: Thou false traitress, thou shalt tell me what manner of drink this is, or else I shall slay thee. And therewith he pulled out his sword, and sware a great oath that he should slay her but if she told him the truth. Ah! mercy, my lord,

said she, and I shall tell you all. And then she told him why she would have slain Tristram, because her children should rejoice his land. Well, said King Meliodas, and therefore shall ye have the law. And so she was condemned by the assent of the barons to be burnt; and then was there made a great fire, and right as she was at the fire to take her execution, young Tristram kneeled afore King Meliodas, and besought him to give him a boon. I will well, said the king again. Then, said young Tristram, give me the life of thy queen, my stepmother. It is unrightfully asked, said King Meliodas, for thou ought of right to hate her, for she would have slain thee with that poison an she might have had her will; and for thy sake most is my cause that she should die.

Sir, said Tristram, as for that, I beseech you of your mercy that you will forgive it her, and as for my part, God forgive it her, and I do; and so much it liked your highness to grant me my boon, for God's love I require you hold your promise. Sithen it is so, said the king, I will that ye have her life. I give her to you, and go ye to the fire and take her, and do with her what ye will. So Sir Tristram went to the fire, and by the commandment of the king delivered her from the death. But after that King Meliodas would never have ado with her as his wife. But at last by the good means of young Tristram he made the king and her accorded. And then the King Meliodas had great joy of his son Tristram, and so had the queen his wife. For ever after in her life, because Sir Tristram saved her from the fire, she did never hate him more, but loved him ever after. And after, as he grew in might and strength, he laboured

ever in hunting and hawking; also he learned to be an harper passing all other. And as books report, of Sir Tristram came all the good terms of venery and hunting, and all the sizes and measures of blowing of an horn; and of him we had first all the terms of hawking, and which were beasts of chase, and beasts of venery, and which were vermins. Wherefore, as meseemeth, all manner of gentlemen have cause to the world's end to praise Sir Tristram, and to pray for his soul.

THEY·TOOK·THEIR·VESSEL·AND
CAME·INTO·THIS·LAND ♣

VII

LA BEALE ISOUD

Sir ſayd he / it is quene Iſoud that oute taken my lady pour quene ſhe is makeles

LA BEALE ISOUD was the wife of King Mark of Cornwall, but she loved the king's nephew, Sir Tristram de Liones, because of a love drink the wo had drunk together while she was still a maid.

King Mark discovered their love and imprisoned them oth, but Sir Tristram contrived to escape, and to rescue ne queen ; and the two fled together.

Then La Beale Isoud and Sir Tristram took their

vessel, and came by water into this land. And so they were not in this land four days, but there came a cry of a joust and tournament that King Arthur let make. When Sir Tristram heard tell of that he disguised himself and La Beale Isoud, and rode unto that tournament.

And so Sir Tristram dressed himself to the range, and overthrew fourteen knights of the Round Table. When Sir Launcelot du Lake saw these knights thus overthrown, he dressed him to Sir Tristram. That saw La Beale Isoud how Sir Launcelot was come into the field. Then she sent unto Sir Launcelot a ring, and bade him wit that it was Sir Tristram de Liones. When Sir Launcelot understood that there was Sir Tristram he was full glad, and would not joust. Then Sir Launcelot espied whither Sir Tristram went, and after him he rode; and either made of other great joy. And so Sir Launcelot brought Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud unto Joyous Gard, that was his own castle, that he had won with his own hands. And wit ye well that castle was garnished and furnished for a king and a queen royal there to have sojourned. And Sir Launcelot charged all his people to honour them and love them as they would do himself.

So Sir Launcelot departed unto King Arthur; and then he told Queen Guenever how he that jousted so well at the last tournament was Sir Tristram. And there he told her how Sir Tristram was escaped and come from King Mark, and how he had with him La Beale Isoud maugre King Mark, and so the queen told all unto King Arthur. So because of Sir Tristram, King

Arthur let make a cry, that on May Day should be a jousts before the Castle of Lonazep; and that castle was fast by Joyous Gard.

Now turn we unto Sir Tristram and to La Beale Isoud, how they made great joy daily together with all manner of mirths they could devise; and every day Sir Tristram would go ride a-hunting for Sir Tristram was that time called the best chaser of the world, and the noblest blower of a horn of all manner of measures. So on a day La Beale Isoud said unto Sir Tristram: I marvel me much, said she, that ye remember not yourself, how ye be here in a strange country, and here be many perilous knights; and well ye wot that King Mark is full of treason; and that ye will ride thus to chase and to hunt unarmed; ye might be destroyed. My fair lady and my love, I cry you mercy, I will no more do so. So then Sir Tristram rode daily a-hunting armed, and his men bearing his shield and his spear. And as he rode a-hunting he met with Sir Dinadan a Knight of the Round Table, that was come to seek Sir Tristram. Then Sir Dinadan told Sir Tristram his name, but Sir Tristram would not tell him his name, wherefore Sir Dinadan was wroth. For such a foolish knight as ye are, said he, I saw but late this day lying by a well, and he fared as he slept; and there he lay like a fool grinning, and would not speak; and well I wot he was a lover. Ah, fair sir, said Sir Tristram, are ye not a lover? Mary, fie on that craft! said Sir Dinadan. That is evil said, said Sir Tristram, for a knight may never be of prowess, but if he be a lover. It is well said, said Sir Dinadan; now tell me your name, sith ye be a lover,

or else I shall do battle with you. As for that, said Sir Tristram, it is no reason to fight with me but I tell you my name; and my name ye shall not wit at this time. Fie for shame, said Dinadan, art thou a knight and durst not tell thy name? therefore I will fight with thee. As for that, said Sir Tristram, I will be advised, for I will not do battle but if me list. Fie on thee, coward, said Sir Dinadan.

And thus as they hoved still, they saw a knight come riding. Lo, said Sir Tristram, see where cometh a knight, will joust with you. Anon as Dinadan beheld him he said: That is the same doted knight that I saw lie by the well, neither sleeping nor waking. I know that knight well, said Sir Tristram, he is the king's son of Northumberland, his name is Epinegris; he is as great a lover as I know, and he loveth the king's daugher of Wales, a full fair lady. And now I suppose, an ye require him he will joust with you, and then shall ye prove whether a lover be a better knight, or ye that will not love a lady. Well, said Dinadan, now thou shalt see what I shall do. Therewithal he spake on high and said: Sir knight, make thee ready to joust with me. Sir, said Epinegris, is that the rule of you errant knights for to make a knight to joust, will he or nill? As for that, said Dinadan, make thee ready, for here is for me. And therewithal they met together so hard that Epinegris smote down Sir Dinadan. Then Sir Tristram rode to Dinadan and said: How now, meseemeth the lover hath well sped. Fie on thee, coward, said Sir Dinadan, and if thou be a good knight avenge me. Nay, said Sir Tristram, I will not joust at this time. Defend me

rom thy fellowship, for I never sped well since I met vith thee, said Sir Dinadan. Well, said Sir Tristram, peradventure I could tell you tiding of Sir Tristram. God defend me, said Dinadan, from thy fellowship, for Sir Tristram were mickle the worse an he were in thy company: and then they departed. Sir, said Sir Tristram, yet it may happen I shall meet with you in other places.

So rode Sir Tristram unto Joyous Gard, and told La Beale Isoud of all his adventure, and when she heard him tell of Sir Dinadan: Alas, sir, said she, why brought ye not him with you? Have ye no care, said Sir Tristram, for he rideth to seek me in this country; and therefore he will not away until he have met with me. Right so there came in a varlet and told Sir Tristram how there was come an errant knight unto the town, with such colours upon his shield. That is Sir Dinadan, said Sir Tristram; wit ye well what ye shall do: send ye for him, my Lady Isoud and I will not be seen, and ye shall hear the merriest knight that ever ye spake withal, and the maddest talker; and I pray you heartily that ye make him good cheer, for he is the best bourder and japer, and a noble knight of his hands, and the best fellow that I know, and all good knights love his fellowship.

Then anon La Beale Isoud sent and prayed Sir Dinadan that he would come into the castle and repose him there with a lady. With a good will, said Sir Dinadan; and so he mounted upon his horse and rode into the castle; and there he alighted, and was unarmed, and brought into the castle. Anon La Beale Isoud

came unto him and either saluted other; then she asked him of whence that he was. Madam, said Dinadan, I am of the court of King Arthur, and knight of the Table Round, and my name is Sir Dinadan. What do ye in this country? said La Beale Isoud. Madam, said he, I seek Sir Tristram, the good knight, for it was told me he was in this country. It may well be, said La Beale Isoud, but I am not ware of him. Madam, said Sir Dinadan, I marvel of Sir Tristram and mo other lovers, what aileth them to be so mad and so sotted upon women. Why, said La Beale Isoud, are ye a knight and be no lover? it is shame to you: wherefore ye may not be called a good knight but if ye make a quarrel for a lady. Defend me, said Dinadan, for the joy of love is too short, and the sorrow thereof, and what cometh thereof, dureth over long. Ah, said La Beale Isoud, say ye not so, for here fast by was the good knight Sir Bleoberis, that fought with three knights at once for a damosel's sake, and he won her afore the King of Northumberland. It was so, said Sir Dinadan, for I know him well for a good knight and a noble, and come of noble blood; for all be noble knights of whom he is come of, that is Sir Launcelot du Lake.

Now I pray you, said La Beale Isoud, tell me will you fight for my love with three knights that do me great wrong? and insomuch as ye be a knight of King Arthur's I require you to do battle for me. Then Sir Dinadan said: I shall say you be as fair a lady as ever I saw any, and much fairer than is my lady Queen Guenever, but wit ye well at one word I will not fight for you with three knights. Then Isoud laughed, and

had good game of him. So he had all the cheer she might make him, and there he lay all that night. And on the morn early Sir Tristram armed him, and La Beale Isoud gave him a good helm ; and then he promised her that he would meet with Sir Dinadan, and they two would ride together into Lonazep, where the tournament should be : and there shall I make ready for you where ye shall see the tournament. Then departed Sir Tristram with two squires that bare his shield and his spears that were great and long.

Then after that Sir Dinadan departed, and rode his way a great pace until he had overtaken Sir Tristram. And when Sir Dinadan had overtaken him he knew him anon, and he hated the fellowship of him above all other knights. Ah, said Sir Dinadan, art thou that coward knight I met with yesterday ? keep thee, for thou shalt joust with me maugre thy head. Well, said Sir Tristram, I am loath to joust. And so they let their horses run, and Sir Tristram missed of him a-purpose, and Sir Dinadan breake a spear upon Sir Tristram, and therewith Sir Dinadan dressed him to draw out his sword. Not so, said Sir Tristram, why are ye so wroth ? I will not fight. Fie on thee, coward, said Dinadan, thou shamest all knights. As for that, said Sir Tristram, I care not, for I will wait upon you and be under your protection ; for because ye are so good a knight ye may save me. The devil deliver me of thee, said Sir Dinadan, for thou art as goodly a man of arms and of thy person as ever I saw, and the most coward that ever I saw. What wilt thou do with those great spears that thou carriest with thee ? I shall give them, said Sir Tristram, to some

good knight when I come to the tournament; and if I see you do best, I shall give them to you.

So thus as they rode talking they saw where came an errant knight afore them, that dressed him to joust. Lo, said Sir Tristram, yonder is one will joust; now dress thee to him. And so they dressed their shields and their spears, and they met together so hard that the other knight smote down Sir Dinadan from his horse. Lo, said Sir Tristram, it had been better ye had left. Fie on thee coward, said Sir Dinadan. Then he started up and gat his sword in his hand, and proffered to do battle on foot. Whether in love or in wrath? said the other knight. Let us do battle in love, said Sir Dinadan. What is your name, said that knight, I pray you tell me. Wit ye well my name is Sir Dinadan. Ah, Dinadan, said that knight, and my name is Gareth, the youngest brother unto Sir Gawaine. Then either made of other great cheer, for this Gareth was the best knight of all the brethren.

Then were they ware where came a knight afore them well horsed and well armed, and he made him ready to joust. Fair knights, said Sir Tristram, look betwixt you who shall joust with yonder knight, for I warn you I will not have ado with him. Then shall I, said Sir Gareth. And so they encountered together, and there that knight smote down Sir Gareth over his horse's croup. How now, said Sir Tristram unto Sir Dinadan, dress thee now and revenge the good knight Gareth. That shall I not, said Sir Dinadan, for he hath stricken down a much bigger knight than I am. Ah, said Sir Tristram, now Sir Dinadan, I see and feel well your

heart faileth you, therefore now shall ye see what I shall do. And then Sir Tristram hurtled unto that knight, and smote him quite from his horse. When Sir Dinadan saw that he marvelled greatly ; and then he deemed that it was Sir Tristram.

Then this knight that was on foot pulled out his sword, to do battle. What is your name ? said Sir Tristram. Wit ye well, said that knight, my name is Sir Palomides. What knight hate ye most ? said Sir Tristram. Sir knight, said he, I hate Sir Tristram to the death, for an I may meet with him the one of us shall die. Ye say well, said Sir Tristram, and wit ye well that I am Sir Tristram de Liones, and now do your worst. When Sir Palomides heard him say so he was astonied. And then he said : I wot not what aileth me, for meseemeth ye are a good knight, and none other knight that named himself a good knight should not hate you, therefore I require you, Sir Tristram, take no displeasure at mine unkind words. Sir Palomides, said Sir Tristram, ye say well, and well I wot ye are a good knight, for I have seen you proved ; therefore an ye have any evil will to me, now may ye right it, for I am ready at your hand. Not so, my lord Sir Tristram, I will do you knightly service in all thing as ye will. And right so I will take you, said Sir Tristram. And so they rode forth on their ways talking of many things. O my lord Sir Tristram, said Dinadan, foul have ye mocked me, for God knoweth I came into this country for your sake, by the advice of my lord Sir Launcelot ; and yet would not Sir Launcelot tell me the certainty of you, where I should find you. Truly, said Sir Tristram, Sir Launcelot

wist well where I was, for I abode within his own castle. Thus they rode until they were ware of the Castle Lonazep. And then were they ware of four hundred tents and pavilions, and marvellous great ordinance. So God help me, said Sir Tristram, yonder I see the greatest ordinance that ever I saw. Sir, said Dinadan, in Surluse, at that tournament that Galahalt of the Long Isles made, the which there dured seven days, was as great a gathering as is here, for there were many nations. Who was the best ? said Sir Tristram. Sir, it was Sir Launcelot du Lake and the noble knight, Sir Lamorak de Galis, and Sir Launcelot won the degree. I doubt not, said Sir Tristram, but he won the degree ; and of the death of Sir Lamorak, it was over great pity, for I dare say he was the cleanest mighted man and the best winded of his age that was alive. And if they were not the cousins of my lord Arthur that slew him, they should die for it. And for such things I fear to draw unto the court of my lord Arthur ; I will that ye wit it, said Sir Tristram unto Sir Gareth.

Sir, I blame you not, said Gareth, for well I understand the vengeance of my brethren. But as for me, I meddle not of their matters, therefore there is none of them that loveth me. And God would I had been by, said Gareth, when the noble knight, Sir Lamorak, was slain. Now as Jesu be my help, said Sir Tristram, it is well said of you, for I had liefer than all the gold betwixt this and Rome I had been there. Now speak we of other deeds, said Palomides, and let him be, for his life ye may not get again.

Then Sir Tristram and his three fellows rode unto

Joyous Gard. Well, said Sir Tristram, we must forward to-morn. And then he devised how it should be; and Sir Tristram devised to send his two pavilions to set them fast by the well of Lonazep, and therein shall be the queen La Beale Isoud. It is well said, said Sir Dinadan, but when Sir Palomides heard of that he was ravished out of measure; notwithstanding he said but little. So when they came to Joyous Gard Sir Palomides would not have gone into the castle, but as Sir Tristram took him by the finger, and led him into the castle. And when Sir Palomides saw La Beale Isoud, he was ravished so he might unnethe speak. So they went unto meat, but Palomides might not eat, and there was all the cheer that might be had. And on the morn they were apparelled to ride toward Lonazep. So Sir Tristram had three squires, and La Beale Isoud had three gentlewomen, and both the queen and they were richly apparelled; and other people had they none, but varlets to bear their shields and their spears. And thus they rode forth till that they came to the well where Sir Tristram's pavilions were set; and there they alighted and there they saw many pavilions and great array.

Now upon what party, said Tristram, is it best we be withal as to-morn? Sir, said Palomides, ye shall have mine advice to be against King Arthur as to-morn, for on his party will be Sir Launcelot and many good knights of his blood. And the more men of worship that they be, the more worship we shall win. That is full knightly spoken, said Sir Tristram; and right so will we do. So that night they were lodged with the best. And on the morn they were arrayed all in green

trappings, shields and spears, and La Beale Isoud in the same colour, and her damosels. And right so these four knights came into the field endlong and through. And so they led La Beale Isoud thither as she should stand and behold all the jousts in a bay window. And then these four knights rode straight unto the party of the King of Scots.

When King Arthur had seen them do all this he asked Sir Launcelot what were these knights and that queen. Sir, said Launcelot, I cannot say you in certain, but if Sir Tristram be in this country, or Sir Palomides, wit ye well it be they, and La Beale Isoud.

Then the tournament began, and many marvellous deeds were done on both sides. And Sir Palomides did so marvellously well that all men had wonder. For as it happened, Sir Palomides looked up towards La Beale Isoud where she lay in the window; and therewith at the sight of her he took such a rejoicing that he smote down, what with his spear and with his sword, all that ever he met; for through the sight of her he was so enamoured in her love that he seemed at that time, that an both Sir Tristram and Sir Launcelot had been both against him they should have won no worship of him; and in his heart, Sir Palomides wished that with his worship he might have ado with Sir Tristram before all men, because of La Beale Isoud. Then Sir Palomides began to double his strength, and ever he cast up his eye unto La Belle Isoud, and there might no man withstand him; and then Sir Tristram beheld him, and said unto Sir Dinadan: So God help me, Sir Palomides is a passing good knight and

well enduring, but such deeds saw I him never do, nor never heard I tell that ever he did so much in one day. It is his day, said Dinadan; and he would say no more; but to himself he said: An if ye knew for whose love he doth all those deeds of arms, soon would ye abate his courage. Alas, said Sir Tristram, that Sir Palomides is not christened. So said King Arthur and all those that beheld him. Howbeit in his heart Sir Palomides believed in Jesu Christ and his mild mother Mary, and after he was christened. Then all people gave him the prize, as for the best knight that day, that he passed Sir Launcelot outher Sir Tristram. Well, said Dinadan, to himself, all this worship that Sir Palomides hath here this day he may thank the Queen Isoud, for had he been away this day Sir Palomides had not gotten the prize this day.

Right so came into the field Sir Launcelot du Lake, and saw and heard the noise and cry and the great worship that Sir Palomides had. He dressed him against Sir Palomides, and thought to smite him down. And as Sir Launcelot should have stricken him Sir Palomides smote his spear aside, and smote it a-two with his sword. And Sir Palomides rushed upon Sir Launcelot, and with his sword he smote his horse's neck that Sir Launcelot rode upon, and then Sir Launcelot fell to the earth. Then was the cry huge and great: See how Sir Palomides the Saracen hath smitten down Sir Launcelot's horse. For many knights held there against that it was unknightly done in a tournament to kill an horse wilfully, but that it had been done in plain battle, life for life.

When Sir Ector de Maris saw Sir Launcelot his brother have such a despite, he ran against Sir Palomides, and smote him so hard that he bare him quite from his horse. Then Sir Launcelot dressed his shield upon his shoulder, and with his sword naked in his hand, and so came upon Sir Palomides fiercely and said: Wit thou well thou hast done me this day the greatest despite that ever any worshipful knight did to me in tournament or in jousts, and therefore I will be avenged upon thee. Ah, mercy, noble knight, said Palomides, and forgive me mine unkindly deeds, for I have no power or might to withstand you, and I have done so much this day that well I wot I did never so much, nor never shall in my life days; and therefore, most noble knight, I require thee spare me as at this day; an ye put me from my worship now, ye put me from the greatest worship that ever I had or ever shall have in my life days. Well, said Sir Launcelot, I see, for to say thee sooth, ye have done marvellously well this day; and I understand a part for whose love ye do it, and well I wot that love is a great mistress. And if my lady were here as she is not, wit ye well ye should not bear away the worship. But beware your love be not discovered, for an Sir Tristram may know it ye will repent it; and sithen my quarrel is not here, ye shall have this day the worship as for me. Sir, said Sir Palomides, I have done Sir Tristram no treason, for love is free for all men, and though I have loved his lady, she is my lady as well as his; howbeit I have wrong if any wrong be, for he rejoices her, and has his desire of her, and so had I never nor never am like

o have, and yet shall I love her to the uttermost days f my life as well as he. For by her and because of er, I have won the worship that I have, and else had been the most simplest knight in the world. For vhen I remembered me of La Beale Isoud I won the vorship wheresomever I came for the most part; and et had I never reward nor bounté of her the days f my life, and yet have I been her knight guerdonless. And therewithal Sir Launcelot suffered Sir Palomides o depart.

And then the king let blow to lodging; and because ir Palomides began first, and never he went out of he field to repose him, but ever he was doing marvel- ously well either on foot or on horseback, and longest uring, King Arthur and all the kings gave Sir Palomides he honour and the gree as for that day. And then every night drew to his inn. And then King Arthur and very knight spake of those four knights; but above all nen they gave Sir Palomides the prize. Sir, said Sir Launcelot unto King Arthur, as for Sir Palomides dare say as for this day he is best worthy to have the egree, for he reposed him never, and he began first nd longest held on. And yet, well I wot that there vas a better knight than he, and that shall be proved or ve depart. Thus they talked on either party; and ir Dinadan railed with Sir Tristram and said: What the evil is upon thee this day? for Sir Palomides' strength eebled never this day, but ever he doubled his strength. And thou farest all this day as though thou hadst been sleep, and therefore I call thee coward. Well, Dinadan, aid Sir Tristram, I was never called coward or now of

no earthly knight in my life; and so Sir Tristram was in manner wroth with Sir Dinadan. But all this Sir Dinadan said because he would anger Sir Tristram; for well knew Sir Dinadan that an Sir Tristram were thoroughly wroth Sir Palomides should not get the prize upon the morn.

So on the morn Sir Tristram was ready, and La Beale Isoud with Sir Palomides and Sir Gareth. And so they rode in green full freshly beseen unto the forest. And Sir Tristram left Sir Dinadan sleeping in his bed. And so as they rode it happed the king and Sir Launcelot stood in a window, and saw Sir Tristram ride and La Beale Isoud. Sir, said Launcelot, yonder rideth the fairest lady of the world except your queen, Dame Guenever. Who is that? said Sir Arthur. Sir, said he, it is Queen Isoud that, out-taken my lady your queen, she is makeless. Take your horse, said Arthur, and array you at all rights as I will do, and I promise you I will see her. Then anon they were armed and horsed, and either took a spear and rode unto the forest. Sir, said Launcelot, it is not good that ye go too nigh them, for wit ye well there are two as good knights as now are living, and therefore, sir, I pray you be not too hasty. For peradventure there will some knights be displeased an we come suddenly upon them. As for that, said Arthur, I will see her, for I take no force whom I grieve. Sir, said Launcelot, ye put yourself in great jeopardy. As for that, said the king, we will take the adventure. Right so anon the king rode even to her, and saluted her, and said: God you save. Sir, said she, ye are welcome. Then the king beheld her, and liked her wonderly well.

With that came Sir Palomides unto Arthur, and said: Uncourteous knight, what seekest thou here? thou art uncourteous to come upon a lady thus suddenly, therefore withdraw thee. Sir Arthur took none heed of Sir Palomides' words, but ever he looked still upon Queen Isoud. Then was Sir Palomides wroth, and therewith he took a spear, and came hurtling upon King Arthur, and smote him down. When Sir Launcelot saw that despite of Sir Palomides, he said to himself: I am loath to have ado with yonder knight, not for his own sake but for Sir Tristram. For if I smite down Sir Palomides I must have ado with Sir Tristram, and that were overmuch for me to match them both, for they are two noble knights; notwithstanding, whether I live or I die, needs must I revenge my lord. And therewith Sir Launcelot cried to Sir Palomides: Keep thee from me. And then they rushed together with two spears strongly, but Sir Launcelot smote Sir Palomides so hard that he went quite out of his saddle, and had a great fall. When Sir Tristram saw Sir Palomides have that fall, he said to Sir Launcelot: Sir knight keep thee, for I must joust with thee. As for to joust with me, said Sir Launcelot, I will not fail you, for no dread I have of you; but I am loath to have ado with you and I might choose, for I will that ye wit that I must revenge my special lord that was unhorsed unwarly and unknightly. And therefore, though I revenge that fall, take ye no displeasure therein, for he is to me such a friend that I may not see him shamed.

Anon Sir Tristram understood by his person and

by his knightly words that it was Sir Launcelot du Lake, and verily Sir Tristram deemed that it was King Arthur, he that Sir Palomides had smitten down. Then Sir Tristram put his spear from him, and put Sir Palomides again on horseback, and Sir Launcelot put King Arthur on horseback and so departed. So God me help, said Sir Tristram unto Palomides, ye did not worshipfully when ye smote down that knight so suddenly as ye did. And wit ye well ye did yourself great shame, for the knights came thither of their gentleness to see a fair lady; and that is ever a good knight's part, to behold a fair lady; and ye had not ado to play such masteries afore my lady. Wit thou well it will turn to anger, for he that ye smote down was King Arthur, and that other was the good knight Sir Launcelot. But I shall not forget the words of Sir Launcelot when he called him a man of great worship, whereby I wist that it was King Arthur. And as for Sir Launcelot, an there had been five hundred knights in the meadow, he would not have refused them, and yet he said he would refuse me. By that again I wist it was Sir Launcelot, for ever he forbeareth me in every place, and showeth me great kindness; and of all knights I out-take none, say what men will say, he beareth the flower of all chivalry. An he be well angered, and that him list to do his utterance without any favour, I know him not alive but Sir Launcelot is over hard for him, be it on horseback, or on foot. I may never believe, said Sir Palomides, that King Arthur will ride so privily as a poor errant knight. Ah, said Sir Tristram, ye know not my lord Arthur, for all knights

may learn to be a knight of him. Then Sir Tristram sent Queen Isoud unto her lodging in the priory, there to behold the tournament.

Then there was a cry to all knights, that when they heard an horn blow they should make jousts as they did the first day. And when Sir Tristram saw them so begin he came into the field with Sir Palomides, and Sir Gareth, and each smote down two knights. Then said Sir Arthur unto Sir Launcelot: see yonder three knights do passingly well, and namely the first that jousted. Sir, said Launcelot, that knight began not yet, but ye shall see him this day do marvellously. Then said Sir Tristram unto Palomides: How feel ye yourself? May ye do this day as ye did yesterday? Nay, said Palomides, I feel myself so weary, and so sore bruised of the deeds of yesterday, that I may not endure as I did yesterday. That me repenteth, said Sir Tristram, for I shall lack you this day. Sir Palomides said: Trust not to me, for I may not do as I did. All these words, said Palomides for to beguile Sir Tristram. Sir, said Sir Tristram unto Sir Gareth, then must I trust upon you. An need be, said Sir Gareth, I shall not fail you. Then Sir Palomides rode by himself, and in despite of Sir Tristram he put himself in the thickest press among them of Orkney, and there he did so marvellously that none might withstand him a stroke.

When Sir Tristram saw that, he said to himself: He is weary of my company. So he beheld him a great while and did little else. Sir, said Sir Gareth unto Sir Tristram, remember ye not of the words that Sir Dinadan said to you yesterday, and all that he said was

for your worship. Therefore wonder ye not so upon Sir Palomides, for he enforceth himself to win all the honour and worship from you. I may well believe it, said Tristram.

Then Sir Tristram rode into the thickest of the press, and then he did so marvellously well, that the noise went plain from Sir Palomides, and all the poeple cried upon Sir Tristram. How now, said Sir Launcelot unto King Arthur, I told you that this day there would a knight play his pageant.

But when Sir Palomides heard the noise and the cry was turned from him, he rode out on a part and beheld Sir Tristram, and wept passingly sore for despite, for well he wist he should no worship win that day.

Then in came King Arthur, with Sir Launcelot and three knights of his kin, Sir Bleoberis, Sir Bors, and Sir Ector de Maris. And then Launcelot and the three knights of his kin did so great deeds of arms that all the noise began upon Sir Launcelot. And so they beat back the King of Wales and the King of Scots; but Sir Tristram and Sir Gareth abode still in the field. But ever Sir Launcelot and his three kinsmen forbare Sir Tristram. Then said Sir Arthur: Is that Sir Palomides that endureth so well? Nay, said Sir Launcelot, wit ye well it is the good knight Sir Tristram, for yonder ye may see Sir Palomides beholdeth and hoveth, and doth little or nought; wit ye well he is full heavy that Tristram doth such deeds of arms. And sir, ye shall understand that Sir Tristram weeneth this day to beat us all out of the field. And as for me I shall not beat him, beat him who so will.

As the king and Launcelot thus spake, Sir Tristram rode privily out of the press, that none espied him but La Beale Isoud and Sir Palomides, for they two would not let off their eyes upon Sir Tristram. And when Sir Tristram came to his pavilions he found Sir Dinadan in his bed asleep. Awake, said Tristram, ye ought to be ashamed so to sleep when knights have ado in the field. Then Sir Dinadan arose lightly, and when he looked upon Sir Tristram's helm and on his shield and saw so many strokes upon them he said: In good time was I thus asleep, for had I been with you I must needs for shame there have followed you; more for shame than for any prowess that is in me; and I see well now by those strokes that I should have been truly beaten as I was yesterday. Leave your japes, said Sir Tristram, and make you ready to ride with me into the field again. What, said Sir Dinadan, is your heart up? yesterday ye fared as though ye had dreamed. So when Sir Dinadan was armed, then Sir Tristram arrayed him in black armour. O Jesu, said Dinadan, what aileth you this day? meseemeth ye be wilder than ye were yesterday. Then smiled Sir Tristram and said to Dinadan: Await well upon me; if ye see me overmatched look that ye be ever behind me and I shall make you ready way by God's grace. So they took their horses. All this espied Sir Palomides, both their going and their coming, and so did La Beale Isoud, for she knew Sir Tristram above all other.

Then when Sir Palomides saw that Sir Tristram was disguised, he thought to do him a shame. So he rode to a knight that was sore wounded, that sat under

a fair well from the field. Sir knight, said he, I pray you to lend me your armour and your shield, for mine is over-well known in this field. I will well, said the knight, that ye have mine armour and my shield, if they may do you any avail. So Sir Palomides armed him hastily in that knight's armour, and so he came riding into the field. And then Sir Palomides rode against Sir Tristram, and so they lashed together and gave many sad strokes. Then Sir Tristram had marvel what knight he was that did battle so knightly with him, and many marvelled what knight he might be that so encountered with the black knight, Sir Tristram. Full well knew La Beale Isoud that there was Sir Palomides that fought with Sir Tristram, for she espied all in her window where that she stood, as Sir Palomides changed his harness with the wounded knight. And then she began to weep heartily for the despite of Sir Palomides.

So there came knights to Launcelot and said: Sir Launcelot, ye must needs fight with yonder knight in the black harness, that was Sir Tristram, for he hath almost overcome that good knight with the silver shield, that was Sir Palomides. Then Sir Launcelot rode between them and said to Palomides: Sir knight let me have the battle, for ye have need to be reposed. Then Sir Palomides suffered Sir Launcelot to fight with Sir Tristram. For full well wist he that Sir Launcelot knew not Sir Tristram, and there he hoped that Sir Launcelot should beat or shame him, whereof Sir Palomides was full fain. And so Sir Launcelot gave Sir Tristram many sad strokes, but Sir Launcelot knew

not Sir Tristram, but Sir Tristram knew well Sir Launcelot. And thus they fought long together, that La Beale Isoud was well-nigh out of her mind for sorrow.

Then Sir Dinadan told Sir Gareth how that knight in the black harness was Sir Tristram: And this is Launcelot that fighteth with him, that needs must have the better, for Sir Tristram hath had too much travail this day. Then let us smite him down said Sir Gareth. And forthwithal Gareth rushed upon Sir Launcelot and gave him a great stroke upon his helm so hard that he was astonied. Then came Sir Dinadan with a spear, and he smote Launcelot such a buffet that horse and all fell to the earth. O Jesu, said Sir Tristram unto Sir Gareth and Sir Dinadan, fie for shame, why did ye smite him down? ye do yourself a great shame, and him no disworship; for I held him reasonable hot, though ye had not holpen me.

Then came Sir Palomides, and smote down Sir Dinadan. Then Sir Launcelot, because Sir Dinadan had smitten him aforehand, assailed Sir Dinadan passing sore, and Sir Dinadan defended him mightily. Then came Palomides fresh upon Sir Tristram. And when Tristram saw him come, he thought to deliver him at once, because he would help Sir Dinadan, that stood in great peril with Sir Launcelot. Then Tristram gave Palomides a great buffet, and then he gat Sir Palomides and pulled him down underneath him. And so fell Sir Tristram with him; and Sir Tristram leapt up lightly, and went betwixt Sir Launcelot and Sir Dinadan, and then they began to do battle together.

Right so Dinadan gat Sir Tristram's horse, and said on high that Sir Launcelot might hear it: My lord Sir Tristram, take your horse. And when Sir Launcelot heard him say so: O Jesu, said Launcelot, what have I done? Ah, my lord Sir Tristram, why were ye disguised? ye have put yourself in great peril this day: but I pray you noble knight to pardon me, for an I had known you we had not done this battle. So they were both horsed again.

Then all the people on the one side gave Sir Launcelot the honour and the degree, and on the other side all the people gave the noble knight Sir Tristram the honour and the degree; but Launcelot said: I am not worthy to have this honour, for I will report me unto all knights that Sir Tristram hath been longer in the field than I, and he hath smitten down many more knights. And therefore I will give Sir Tristram my voice, and so I pray all my fellows so to do. So they gave Sir Tristram the honour and the degree.

Then they blew unto lodging, and Queen Isoud was led unto her pavilions. But wit you well she was wroth out of measure with Sir Palomides, for she saw all his treason from the beginning to the ending.

So then they rode into their pavilions; and when they were alighted they unarmed them and washed their faces and hands, and so yode unto meat, and were set at their table. But when Isoud saw Sir Palomides she changed then her colours, and for wrath she might not speak. Anon Sir Tristram espied her countenance and said: Madam, for what cause make ye us such cheer? we have been sore travailed this day. Mine

own lord, said La Beale Isoud, for God's sake be ye not displeased, for I may none otherwise do; for I saw this day how ye were betrayed and nigh brought to your death. Truly, sir, I saw every deal, and therefore how should I suffer in your presence such a felon and traitor as Sir Palomides; for I saw him with my own eyes how he beheld you when ye went out of the field. For ever he hoved still on his horse till he saw you come in againwards. Then forthwith I saw him ride to a hurt knight, and changed harness with him, and then straight I saw him how he rode into the field. And anon as he had found you he encountered with you, and thus wilfully Sir Palomides did battle with you; and as for him, sir, I was not greatly afraid, but I dread sore Launcelot that knew you not. Madam, said Palomides, ye may say whatso ye will, I may not contrary you, but by my knighthood I knew not Sir Tristram. Sir Palomides, said Sir Tristram, I will take your excuse, but well I wot ye spared me but little, but all is pardoned on my part. Then La Beale Isoud said no more at that time.

And therewithal two knights armed came unto the pavilion, and there they alighted both, and came in armed at all pieces. Fair knights, said Sir Tristram, ye are to blame to come thus armed at all pieces upon me while we are at our meat; if ye would anything when we were in the field there might ye have eased your hearts. Not so, said the one of those knights, we come not for that intent, but wit ye well Sir Tristram, we be come hither as your friends. And I am come here for to see you, and this knight is come for to see La

Beale Isoud. Then said Sir Tristram: I require you do off your helms that I may see you. And when their helms were off, then said Sir Tristram unto La Beale Isoud, Madam arise, for here is my lord, King Arthur. Then the king and the queen kissed, and Sir Launcelot and Sir Tristram braced either other in arms, and then there was joy without measure; and at the request of La Beale Isoud, King Arthur and Sir Launcelot were unarmed, and then there was merry talking. Madam, said Sir Arthur, it is many a day sithen that I have desired to see you, for ye have been praised so far; and now I dare say ye are the fairest that ever I saw, and Sir Tristram is as fair and as good a knight as any that I know; and therefore me beseemeth ye are well beset together. Sir, God thank you, said Isoud, and the noble knight Sir Tristram; of your great goodness and largess ye are peerless. Thus they talked of many things and of all the whole jousts. But for what cause, said King Arthur, were ye, Sir Tristram against us? Ye are a knight of the Table Round; of right ye should have been with us. Sir, said Tristram, here is Sir Gareth your own nephew, and Dinadan, caused me to be against you. That may I repent, said Dinadan, for this unhappy Sir Tristram brought us to this tournament, and many great buffets he caused us to have. Then the king and Launcelot laughed that they might not sit.

What knight was that, said Arthur, that held you so short, this with the shield of silver. Sir, said Tristram, here he sitteth at this board. What, said Arthur, was it Sir Palomides? Wit ye well it was he, said La

Beale Isoud. So God me help, said Arthur, that was unknightly done of you of so good a knight, for I have heard many people call you a courteous knight. Sir, said Palomides, I knew not Sir Tristram, for he was so disguised. So God me help, said Launcelot, it may well be, for I myself knew not Sir Tristram; but I marvel why ye turned on our party. As for that, said Sir Tristram, I have pardoned him, and I would be right loath to leave his fellowship, for I love right well his company: so they left off and talked of other things.

And in the evening King Arthur and Sir Launcelot departed unto their lodging; but wit ye well Sir Palomides had envy heartily, for all that night he had never rest in his bed, but wailed and wept out of measure.

And on the morn they were armed, and clothed all in red, both Isoud and all they; and so they led her passingly freshly through the field, into the priory where was her lodging. Then they heard three blasts blow, and every knight dressed him unto the field. And at first the noise began greatly upon Sir Palomides. Lo, said King Arthur, yonder Palomides beginneth to play his pageant. So God help me he is a passing good knight. And right as they talked thus, in came Sir Tristram as thunder, and with one spear he smote down four knights. Then the noise and cry changed from Sir Palomides, and all the people cried: O Tristram, Tristram.

How now, said Launcelot unto Arthur, yonder rideth a knight that playeth his pageants. Then Sir

Arthur and Sir Launcelot dressed them, and gat into the thickest of the press. And there Sir Tristram unknowing smote down King Arthur, and there Sir Launcelot would have rescued him, but there were so many upon Sir Launcelot that they pulled him down from his horse. Then the other party did then pain to take King Arthur and Sir Launcelot prisoner. But Sir Launcelot fared as it had been an hungry lion, so that no knight durst nigh him. Then came Sir Ector de Maris and pulled down Sir Palomides under his feet, and gat Sir Launcelot du Lake a horse, and brought it to him; but Sir Palomides leapt afore and gat his horse by the bridle, and leapt into the saddle. So God me help, said Launcelot, ye are better worthy to have that horse than I. Then Sir Ector brought Sir Launcelot another horse. Gramercy, said Launcelot, unto his brother. So with one spear Sir Launcelot smote down four knights and brought King Arthur a horse. Then Sir Launcelot with King Arthur and a few of his knights of Sir Launcelot's kin did marvellous deeds. Notwithstanding the other party held them so fast together that King Arthur and his knights were overmatched.

And when Sir Tristram saw that, what labour King Arthur and his knights, and in especial the noble deeds that Sir Launcelot did with his own hands, he marvelled greatly. Then he called unto him Sir Palomides, Sir Gareth, and Sir Dinadan, and said thus to them: My fair fellows, wit ye well I will turn to King Arthur's party, for I saw never so few men do so well, and it will be shame to us knights that be of the Round Table

to see our lord King Arthur, and that noble knight Sir Launcelot dishonoured. It will be well done, said Sir Gareth and Sir Dinadan. Do your best, said Palomides, for I will not change my party that I came in withal. And so departed Sir Palomides from them. Then Sir Tristram, Gareth, and Dinadan, turned with Sir Launcelot, and with their help King Arthur's party prevailed. Then many knights gave the prize to Sir Tristram, and many gave the prize unto Sir Launcelot. Fair lords, said Tristram, I thank you of the honour ye would give me, but I pray you heartily that ye would give your voice to Sir Launcelot, for by my faith I will give Sir Launcelot my voice. But Launcelot would not have it, so the prize was given betwixt them both.

Then every man rode to his lodging, and Sir Bleoberis and Sir Ector rode with Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud unto their pavilions. Then came Sir Palomides to the port of the pavilions and said on high: Where art thou Sir Tristram de Liones. Sir, said Dinadan, that is Palomides. What, Sir Palomides, will ye not come in here among us. Fie on thee, traitor, said Palomides, for wit ye well an it were daylight as it is night I should slay thee, mine own hands. And if ever I may get thee, thou shalt die for this day's deed. Sir Palomides, said Sir Tristram, ye wite me with wrong, for had ye done as I did ye had won worship. But sithen ye give so large warning I shall be well ware of you. Fie on thee traitor, said Palomides, and therewith departed.

Then on the morn Sir Tristram, Bleoberis, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Gareth and Sir Dinadan, what by water and

what by land, they brought La Beale Isoud unto Joyous Gard, and there reposed them a seven night, and made all the mirths and disports they could devise. And King Arthur and his knights drew unto Camelot.

So at the seven nights' end Sir Bleoberis and Sir Ector departed from Sir Tristram and from the queen; and Sir Gareth and Sir Dinadan abode with Sir Tristram. And when Sir Bleoberis and Sir Ector were come there as the Queen Guenever was lodged, in a castle by the seaside, and through the grace of God the queen was recovered of her malady that she had, then she asked the two knights from whence they came. They said that they came from Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud. How doth Sir Tristram, said the queen, and La Beale Isoud? Truly, said these two knights, he doth as a noble knight should do; and as for the Queen Isoud, she is peerless of all ladies; for, to speak of her beauty, bounté, and mirth, and of her goodness, we saw never her match as far as we have ridden and gone. O Jesu mercy, said Queen Guenever, so saith all the people that have seen her. God would that I had part of her conditions; and it is misfortuned me of my sickness while that tournament endured. And as I suppose I shall never see in all my life such an assembly of knights and ladies as ye have done.

Then the knights told her how Palomides won the degree at the first day with great noblesse; and the second day Sir Tristram won the degree; and the third day Sir Launcelot won the degree. Well, said Queen Guenever, who did best all these three days. So God me help, said the three knights, Sir Launcelot

and Sir Tristram had least dishonour. And wit ye well Sir Palomides did passing well and mightily; but it seemeth that Sir Palomides is passing envious.

Then shall he never win worship, said Queen Guenever, for all men of worship hate an envious man, and will show him no favour, and he that is courteous, and kind, and gentle, hath favour in every place.

SHE THOUGHT HIM A PASSING GOODLY KNIGHT ON HORSEBACK

VIII

ALICE LA BEALE PILGRIM

And whanne he sawe her / he said here have I fond my love and my lady /

SO it happed, says the romancer, there was a duke that hight Ansirus, and he was of the kin of Sir Launcelot. And this knight was a great pilgrim, for every third year he would be at Jerusalem. And because he used all his life to go in pilgrimage men called him Duke Ansirus the Pilgrim. And this duke had a daughter that hight Alice, that was a passing fair woman, and because of her father she was called Alice La Beale Pilgrim. And anon La Beale Alice

heard tell of a knight that kept a certain plot of earth for a twelve month and a day against all comers, for an oath's sake that he had made. And anon as she heard of this cry she went unto Arthur's court, and said openly in hearing of many knights, that what knight may overcome that knight that keepeth that piece of earth shall have me and all my lands.

When the knights of the Round Table heard her say thus many were glad, for she was passing fair and of great rents. Then she dressed her pavilion straight by the piece of land that the knight kept. So she was not so soon there but there came four knights of Arthur's court, Sir Sagramore le Desirous, Sir Harvis de la Marches, Sir Vains, and Sir Perin de la Montaine, and they proffered to joust with the unknown knight; and so they encountered, and that knight smote them all down with one spear. And when La Beale Alice saw him joust so well, she thought him a passing goodly knight on horseback. And then she leapt out of her pavilion, and took that knight by the bridle, and thus she said: Fair knight, I require thee of they knighthood show me thy visage. I dare well, said he, show my visage. And then he put off his helm; and when she saw his visage, she said: O sweet Jesu, thee must I love, and never other. Then show me your visage, said he. Then she unwimpled her visage. And when he saw her he said: Here have I found my love and my lady. Truly, fair lady, said he, I promise you to be your knight, and none other that beareth the life. Now, gentle knight, said she, tell me your name. My name is, said he, Alisander le Orphelin. Now, damosel,

tell me your name. My name is, said she, Alice la Beale Pilgrim. And when we be more at our hearts' ease, both ye and I shall tell other of what blood we be come. So there was great love betwixt them. And as they thus talked there came a knight that hight Harsouse le Berbuse, and then Sir Alisander encountered with him, and at the first Sir Alisander smote him over his horse's croup. Then there came another knight that hight Sir Hewgon and Sir Alisander smote him down as he did that other. Then Sir Hewgon proffered to do battle on foot. Sir Alisander overcame him with three strokes, and there would have slain him had he not yielded.

Then Sir Alisander alighted down, and went to rest him and repose him. And there he told La Beale Alice his history. I am cousin nigh unto Sir Tristram, said he, and son to the good Prince Boudwin of Cornwall, brother to King Mark, that did the king good service. But King Mark hated him because he was better loved in all that country than he. So King Mark sent for my father, Prince Boudwin, and Anglides his wife, and bade them bring their young son with them that he might see him. All this he did to the intent to slay me as well as my father, for he was the falsest traitor born. And when they had dined, King Mark quarrelled with his good brother and struck him suddenly with a dagger, that he never after spake word. Then the Lady Anglides made great dole and swooned, for she saw her lord slain afore her face. Then the queen, La Beale Isoud, sent unto my mother and bade her lightly avoid the court or else her young son should

also be slain. So my mother took me, and fled with such poor men as durst ride with her to her castle of Arundel in Sussex that was hers by right inheritance, and there she endured years and winters till I was big and strong, and the day I was made knight she charged me, upon the high order of knighthood, to avenge the death of my father and so I promised her to be avenged upon King Mark as soon as I might. But Queen Morgan le Fay took me prisoner so I might not yet be revenged upon King Mark. And I was delivered by this damosel that ye see here with me, and because of an oath that I made when Morgan le Fay healed my wounds, I keep this piece of earth against all comers for a twelve month and a day. Sir, said Alice la Beale Pilgrim, meseemeth ye are much beholding to this maiden. That is truth, said Sir Alisander. And then Alice told him of what blood she was come. Sir, wit ye well, she said, I am of the blood of King Ban, that was father unto Sir Launcelot.

Right so Sir Alisander armed him and took his horse, and so he beheld his lady Alice on horseback as he stood in her pavilion. And then was he so enamoured upon her that he wist not whether he were on horseback or on foot.

Right so came the false knight Sir Mordred, and saw Sir Alisander was assotted upon his lady; and therewithal he took his horse by the bridle, and led him here and there, and had cast to have led him out of that place to have shamed him. When the damosel that helped him out of that castle where Morgan le Fay had him prisoner saw how shamefully he was led, anon she let

arm her; and therewith she mounted upon his horse, and gat a naked sword in her hand, and she thrust unto Alisander with all her might, and she gave him such a buffet that he thought the fire flew out of his eyes. And when Alisander felt that stroke he looked about him, and drew his sword. And when she saw that, she fled, and so did Mordred into the forest, and the damosel into the pavilion. So when Alisander understood himself how the false knight would have shamed him had not the damosel been, then was he wroth with himself that Sir Mordred was so escaped his hands. But then Sir Alisander and Alice had good game at the damosel, how sadly she hit him upon the helm.

Then Sir Alisander jousted thus day by day, and on foot he did many battles with many knights of King Arthur's court, and with many knights strangers. Therefore to tell all the battles he did it were overmuch to rehearse, for every day within that twelvemonth he had ado with one knight or with other, and some days he had ado with four; and there was never knight that put him to the worse. And at the twelve months' end he departed with his lady, Alice la Beale Pilgrim. And the damosel would never go from them, and so they went into their country of Benoye, and lived there in great joy. And it so happed that Alisander had never grace nor fortune to come to the court of King Arthur. For an he had come to Sir Launcelot as was his intent, all knights said that knew him, he was one of the strongest knights that ever was in Arthur's days, and should have been knight of the Round Table. And by Alice he had

a son that hight Bellangerus le Beuse, and by good fortune he came to the court of King Arthur, and proved a passing good knight. And ever he held with Sir Launcelot du Lake because of his mother, Alice la Beale Pilgrim.

THEN SHE SAID ALL WITH WEEPING
HOW YOUR GREAT DOING IS CHANG
ED SITH THIS DAY IN THE MORN

IX

NAMELESS WOMEN

/ of her name the Frenſſhe book maketh no mencyon /

AT the virgil of Pentecost, when all the fellowship of the Round Table were come unto Camelot and there heard their service, and the tables were set ready to the meat, right so entered into the hall a full fair gentlewoman on horseback, that had ridden full fast, for her horse was all besweated. Then she there alighted and came before the king and saluted him; and he said: Damosel, God thee bless. Sir, said she, for God's sake say me where Sir Launcelot is.

Yonder ye may see him, said the king. Then she went unto Launcelot and said: Sir Launcelot, I salute you on King Pelles' behalf, and I require you come on with me hereby into a forest. What will ye with me? said Launcelot. Ye shall know, said she, when ye come thither. Well, said he, I will gladly go with you. So Sir Launcelot bade his squire saddle his horse and bring his arms.

Then came the queen unto Launcelot, and said: Will ye leave us at this high feast? Madam, said the gentlewoman, wit ye well he shall be with you to-morn by dinner time. If I wist, said the queen, that he should not be with us here to-morn he should not go with you by my good will. Right so departed Sir Launcelot with the gentlewoman, and rode until that he came into a forest and into a great valley, where they saw an abbey of nuns; and there was a squire ready and opened the gates, and so they entered and descended off their horses. And, then they led him unto the Abbess's chamber and unarmed him; and right so he was ware upon a bed lying two of his cousins, Sir Bors and Sir Lionel, and then he waked them; and when they saw him they made great joy. Sir, said Sir Bors, unto Sir Launcelot, what adventure hath brought you hither, for we weened to-morn to have found you at Camelot? As God me help, said Sir Launcelot, a gentlewoman brought me hither, but I know not the cause.

In the meanwhile that they thus stood talking together, therein came twelve nuns that brought with them Galahad, the which was passing fair and well

made, that unnethe in the world men might not find his match; and all these ladies wept. Sir, said they all, we bring you here this child the which we have nourished, and we pray you to make him a knight, for of a more worthier man's hand may he not receive the order of knighthood. Sir Launcelot beheld the young squire and saw him seemly and demure as a dove, with all manner of good features, that he weened of his age never to have seen so fair a man of form. Then said Sir Launcelot: Cometh this desire of himself? He and all they said yea. Then shall he, said Sir Launcelot, receive the high order of knighthood, as to-morn at the reverence of the high feast. That night Sir Launcelot had passing good cheer; and on the morn at the hour of prime, at Galahad's desire, he made him knight and said: God make him a good man, for of beauty faileth you not as any that liveth. Now fair Sir, said Sir Launcelot, will ye come with me unto the court of King Arthur? Nay, said he, I will not go with you as at this time. Then he departed from them and took his two cousins with him, and so they came to Camelot by the hour of underne on Whitsunday. By that time the king and queen were gone to the minster to hear their service. Then the king and queen were passing glad of Sir Bors and Sir Lionel, and so was all the fellowship. So when the king and all the knights were come from service, the barons espied in the Siege Perilous letters newly written of gold which said: Four hundred winters and four and fifty accomplished after the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ ought this siege to be fulfilled. Then all they said: This is a

THERE CAME TWELVE NUNS THAT BROUGHT WITH THEM GALAHAD

marvellous thing and an adventurous. In the name of God, said Sir Launcelot; and then accompted the term of the writing from the birth of our Lord unto that day. It seemeth me, said Sir Launcelot, this siege ought to be fulfilled this day, for this is the feast of Pentecost after the four hundred and four and fifty year. Then made they to ordain a cloth of silk, for to cover these letters in the Siege Perilous.

Then the king bade haste unto dinner. So when they were served, and all sieges fulfilled save only the Siege Perilous, anon there befell a marvellous adventure, that all the doors and windows of the palace shut by themselves. Then King Arthur spake first and said: By God, fair fellows and lords, we have this day seen a marvellous thing, but or night I suppose we shall see greater marvels.

In the meanwhile came in a good old man, and an ancient, clothed all in white, and there was no knight knew from whence he came. And with him he brought a young knight, both on foot, in red arms, without sword or shield, save a scabbard hanging by his side. And these words he said: Peace be unto you fair lords. Then the old man said unto Arthur: Sir, I bring here a young knight, the which is of king's lineage, and of the kindred of Joseph of Aramathie, whereby the marvels of this court, and of strange realms, shall be fully accomplished.

The king was right glad of his words, and said unto the good man: Sir, ye be right welcome, and the young knight with you. Then the old man made the young man to unarm him, and he was in a coat of red sendal,

and bare a mantle upon his shoulder that was furred with ermine. And the old knight said unto the young knight: Sir, follow me. And anon he led him unto the Siege Perilous, where beside sat Sir Launcelot; and the good man lift up the cloth, and found there letters that said thus: This is the siege of Galahad, the haut prince. Sir, said the old knight, wit ye well that place is yours. And then he set him down surely in that siege. And then he said to the old man: Sir, ye may now go your way, for well have ye done that ye were commanded to do; and recommend me unto my grandsire, King Pelles, and say I shall come and see him as soon as ever I may. So the good man departed.

Then all the knights of the Table Round marvelled greatly of Sir Galahad, that he dust sit there in that Siege Perilous, and was so tender of age; and wist not from whence he came but all only by God; and said: This is he by whom the Sangreal shall be enchieved, for there sat never none but he, but he were mischieved. Then Sir Launcelot beheld his son and had great joy of him. Then the noise was great in all the court, so that it came to the queen. Then she had marvel what knight it might be that durst adventure him to sit in the Siege Perilous. Many said unto the queen he resembled much unto Sir Launcelot. I may well suppose, said the queen, that he is Sir Launcelot's son by King Pelles' daughter, and his name is Galahad.

Then came King Arthur unto Galahad and said: Sir, ye be welcome, for ye shall move many good knights to the quest of the Sangreal, and ye shall enchieve what never knights might bring to an end. Then

the king took him by the hand, and went down from the palace to shew Galahad the adventures of the stone. So all the knights went with him, and when they came to the river they found there a stone fleeting, as it were of red marble, and therein stuck a fair rich sword, and in the pommel thereof were precious stones wrought with subtle letters of gold which said: Never shall man take me hence, but only he by whose side I ought to hang, and he shall be the best knight of the world.

Then the queen heard thereof, and came after with many ladies, and shewed them the stone where it hoved on the water. Sir, said the king unto Sir Galahad, here is a great marvel as ever I saw, and right good knights have assayed and failed. Sir, said Galahad, that is no marvel, for this adventure is not theirs but mine; and for the surety of this sword I brought none with me, for here by my side hangeth the scabbard. And anon he laid his hand on the sword, and lightly drew it out of the stone, and put it in the sheath, and said unto the king: Now it goeth better than it did aforehand. Now have I that sword that sometime was the good knight's, Balin le Savage, and he was a passing good man of his hands; and with this sword by misfortune he slew his brother Balan, and that was great pity, for he was a good knight, and either slew the other through a dolorous stroke that Balin gave unto my grandfather King Pelles, the which is not yet whole, nor not shall be till I heal him.

Therewith the king and all espied where came riding down the river a lady on a white palfrey towards them. Then she saluted the king and queen, and asked

if that Sir Launcelot was there. And then he answered himself: I am here fair lady. Then she said all with weeping: How your great doing is changed sith this day in the morn. Damosel, why say you so? said Launcelot. I say you sooth, said the damosel, for ye were this day the best knight of the world, but who should say so now, he should be a liar, for there is now one better than ye, and well it is proved by the adventures of the sword whereto ye durst not set your hand; and that is the change and leaving of your name. Wherefore I make unto you a remembrance, that ye shall not ween from henceforth that ye be the best knight of the world. As touching upon that, said Launcelot, I know well I was never the best. Yes, said the damosel, that were ye, and are yet, of any sinful man of the world. And, Sir king, Nacien, the hermit, sendeth thee word, that thee shall befall the greatest worship that ever befell king in Britain; and I say you wherefore, for this day shall the Sangreal appear in thy house and feed thee and all thy fellowship of the Round Table. So she departed and went that same way that she came.

Now, said the king, I am sure at this quest of the Sangreal shall all ye of the Table Round depart, and never shall I see you again whole together; therefore I will see you all whole together in the meadow of Camelot to joust and to tourney, that after your death men may speak of it. But all this moving of the king was for this intent, for to see Galahad proved; for the king deemed he should not lightly come again into the court after his departing. So were they assembled in the meadow, both more and less. Then Sir Galahad,

by the prayer of the king and the queen, did upon him a noble jesseraunce, and also he did on his helm, but shield would he take none for no prayer of the king. And then Sir Gawaine and other knights prayed him to take a spear. Right so he did; and the queen was in a tower with all her ladies, for to behold that tournament. Then Sir Galahad dressed him in midst of the meadow, and began to break spears marvellously, that all men had wonder of him; for he there surmounted all other knights, for within a while he had defouled many good knights of the Table Round save twain, that was Sir Launcelot and Sir Percivale.

Then the king, at the queen's request, made him to alight and to unlace his helm, that the queen might see him in the visage. When she beheld him she said: Soothly I dare well say that Sir Launcelot is his father, for never two men resembled more in likeness, therefore it is no marvel though he be of great prowess. So a lady that stood by the queen said: Madam, for God's sake ought he of right to be so good a knight. Yea, forsooth, said the queen, for he is of all parties come of the best knights of the world and of the highest lineage; for Sir Launcelot is come but of the eighth degree from our Lord Jesu Christ, and Sir Galahad is of the ninth degree from our Lord Jesu Christ, therefore I dare say they be the greatest gentlemen of the world.

And then the king and all estates went home unto Camelot, and so went to evensong to the great minster, and so after upon that to supper. Then anon they heard cracking and crying of thunder, that them thought the place should all to-drive. In the midst of this

blast entered a sunbeam more clearer by seven times than ever they saw day, and all they were alighted of the grace of the Holy Ghost. Then began every knight to behold other, and either saw other, by their seeming, fairer than ever they saw afore, and so they looked every man on other as they had been dumb. Then there entered into the hall the Holy Grail covered with white samite, but there might none see it, nor who bare it. And there was all the hall fulfilled with good odours, and every knight had such meats and drinks as he loved best in the world. And when the Holy Grail had been borne through the hall, then the holy vessel departed suddenly, that they wist not where it became: then had they all breath to speak. And then the king yielded thankings to God, of his good grace that he had sent them.

Now, said Sir Gawaine, we have been served this day of what meats and drinks we thought on; but one thing beguiled us, we might not see the Holy Grail, it was so preciously covered. Wherefore I will make here avow, that to-morn, without long abiding, I shall labour in the quest of the Sangreal, that I shall hold me out a twelvemonth and a day, or more if need be, and never shall I return unto the court till I have seen it more openly than it hath been see here; and if I may not speed I shall return again as he that may not be against the will of our Lord Jesu Christ.

When they of the Table Round heard Sir Gawaine say so, they arose up the most part, and made such avows as he had made. Anon as King Arthur heard this he was greatly displeased. Alas, said King Arthur

unto Sir Gawaine, ye have nigh slain me with the avow and promise that ye have made; for through you ye have bereft me the fairest fellowship and the truest of knighthood that ever were seen together in any realm of the world; for when they depart from hence I am sure they all shall never meet more in this world, for they shall die many in the quest. And so it forthinketh me a little, for I have loved them as well as my life. Ah, said Sir Launcelot, comfort yourself; for it shall be unto us a great honour and much more than if we died in any other places, for of death we be siker. Ah, Launcelot, said the king, the great love that I have had unto you all the days of my life maketh me to say such doleful words: for never Christian king had never so many worthy men at his table as I have had this day at the Round Table, and that is my great sorrow.

When the queen, ladies, and gentlewomen, wist these tidings they had such sorrow and heaviness that there might no tongue tell it, for those knights had held them in honour and chierté. But among all other Queen Guenever made great sorrow. I marvel, said she, my lord would suffer them to depart from him. Thus was all the court troubled for the love of the departition of those knights.

And as soon as it was day the king arose, for he had no rest all that night for sorrow. Then he went unto Gawaine and to Sir Launcelot that were arisen for to hear mass. And then the king again said: Ah Gawaine, Gawaine, ye have betrayed me; for never shall my court be amended by you, but ye will never be sorry

for me as I am for you. And therewith the tears began to run down by his visage. And therewith the king said: Ah, knight Sir Launcelot, I require thee thou counsel me, for I would that this quest were undone, an it might be. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, ye saw yesterday so many worthy knights that then were sworn that they may not leave it in no manner of wise. That wot I well, said the king, but it shall so heavy me at their departing that I wot well there shall no manner of joy remedy me. And then the king and the queen went unto the minster. So anon Launcelot and Gawaine commanded their men to bring their arms. And when they all were armed save their shields and their helms, then they came to their fellowship, which were all ready in the same wise, for to go to the minster to hear their service.

Then after the service was done the king would wit how many had undertaken the quest of the Holy Grail; and to accompt them he prayed then all. Then found they by the tale an hundred and fifty, and all were knights of the Round Table. And then they put on their helms and departed, and recommended them all wholly unto the queen; and there was weeping and great sorrow. Then the queen departed into her chamber and held her, so that no man should perceive her great sorrows. When Sir Launcelot missed the queen he went till her chamber, and when she saw him she cried aloud: O Launcelot, Launcelot, ye have betrayed me and put me to death, for to leave thus my lord. Ah, madam, I pray you be not displeased, for I shall come again as soon as I may with my worship.

Alas, said she, that ever I saw you ; but he that suffered on the cross for all mankind, he be unto you good conduct and safety, and all the whole fellowship.

Right so departed Sir Launcelot, and found his fellowship that abode his coming. And so they mounted upon their horses and rode through the streets of Camelot ; and there was weeping of rich and poor, and the king turned away and might not speak for weeping. Right so they departed, and every knight took the way that him liked best.

NOW RECK I NOT THOUGH I DIE·FOR NOW I HOLD ME ONE OF THE BLESSED MAIDENS OF THE WORLD·THAT HATH MADE THE WORTHIEST KNIGHT OF THE WORLD

IX

SIR PERCIVALE'S SISTER

Anon as Galahad saw her / he told grete worshipp of her that she was the best maid living

SIR PERCIVALE'S sister is the saint amongst the women of the Morte D'Arthur; the feminine counterpart of the perfect knight himself. Her mission was to assist Galahad and his fellows in the quest of the Sangreal, the cup of our Lord's last sacrament, brought into Britain by Joseph of Aramathie. The achieving of this mysterious holy vessel, which glides so strangely in and out of the lives of the Morte D'Arthur folks, was denied to all except the pure in heart.

And the book says that the good knight, Galahad, rode so long in his quest of the Sangreal; and it befell him thus that he was benighted in an hermitage. So when they were at rest there came a gentlewoman knocking at the door, and called Galahad, and so the good man came to the door to wit what she would. Then she called the hermit: Sir Ulfin, I am a gentlewoman that would speak with the knight which is with you. Then the good man waked Galahad and bade him: Arise, and speak with a gentlewoman that seemeth hath great need of you. Then Galahad went to her and asked her what she would. Galahad, said she, I would that ye arm you, and mount upon your horse and follow me, for I shall show you within these three days the highest adventure that ever any knight saw. Anon Galahad armed him, and took his horse, and commended him to God, and bade the gentlewoman go, and he would follow.

So she rode as fast as her palfrey might bear her, till they came to the seaside; and there they found the ship where Bors and Percivale were in, the which cried on the ship's board: Sir Galahad, ye be welcome, we have abiden you long. And so they entered into the ship, and the two knights received them both with great joy. Ah Galahad, said Bors, if Launcelot, your father, were here then were we well at ease, for then meseemed we failed nothing. That may not be, said Galahad, but if it please Our Lord.

By then the ship went from the land of Logris, and by adventure it arrived betwixt two rocks passing great and marvellous; but there they might not land, for

there was a swallow of the sea, save there was another ship, and upon it they might go without danger. Go we thither, said the gentlewomen, and there shall we see adventures, for so is Our Lord's will. Then said she unto Sir Percivale: Wot ye what I am? Certes, said he, nay, to my witting. Wit ye well, said she, that I am thy sister, which am daughter of King Pellinore, and therefore wit ye well ye are the man in the world that I most love; and if ye be not in perfect belief of Jesu Christ enter not in no manner of wise, for then should ye perish in the ship, for he is so perfect he will suffer no sinner in him. When Percivale understood that she was his very sister he was inwardly glad, and said: Fair sister, I shall enter therein, for if I be a miscreature or an untrue knight there shall I perish. For he was one of the best knights of the world that at that time was, in whom the very faith stood most in, and except Sir Galahad he was peerless.

In the meanwhile Galahad blessed him, and entered therein; and then next the gentlewoman, and then Sir Bors and Sir Percivale. And when they were in, it was so marvellous fair and rich that they marvelled; and in the midst of the ship was a fair bed, and Galahad went thereto, and found therein a sword, rich and fair, and it was drawn out of the sheath half a foot and more.

Then Sir Percivale's sister opened a box that stood thereby, and took out girdles which seemed wrought with golden threads, and on that were set full precious stones, and a rich buckle of gold. Lo, lords, said she, here is the girdle that ought to be set about this sword. And wit ye well the greatest part of this girdle was made

of my hair, which I loved well while that I was a woman of the world. But as soon as I wist this adventure was ordained me I clipped off my hair, and made this girdle in the name of God. Then she went and set the girdle on the sword.

Then Galahad beheld the sword and saw letters like blood that said: Let see who shall assay to draw me out of my sheath, but if he be more hardier than any other; and who draweth me wit ye well he shall never fail of shame of his body, or be wounded to the death. By my faith, said Galahad, I would draw the sword out of the sheath, but the offending is so great that I shall not set my hand thereto. Now sir, said the gentlewoman, wit ye well that the drawing of this sword is warned to all men save all only to you. And sir, said she, there was a king that hight Pelles, the maimed king. And while he might ride he supported much Christendom and Holy Church. So upon a day he hunted in a wood of his that lasted unto the sea; and at the last he lost his hounds and his knights save only one: and he and his knight went till they came towards Ireland, and there he found the ship. And he entered therein, for he was right perfect of his life, but his knight had none hardiness to enter; and there he found this sword, and drew it out as much as ye may see. So therewith entered a spear wherewith he was smitten him through both the thighs, and never sith might be he healed, nor nought shall to-fore we come to him. Thus, said she, was not King Pelles, your grandsire, maimed for his hardiness? In the name of God, damosel said Galahad.

Now, said the fellowship, what is the name of the sword, and what shall we call it? Truly, said she, the name of the sword is the Sword with the Strange Girdles. Then they said to Galahad: In the name of Jesu Christ, we pray you that ye gird you with this sword, which hath been desired so much in the realm of Logris. Now let me begin, said Galahad, to grip this sword for to give you courage; but wit ye well it longeth no more to me than it doth to you. And then he gripped about it with his fingers a great deal; and then she girt him about the middle with the sword. Now reck I not though I die, for now I hold me one of the blessed maidens of the world, which hath made the worthiest knight of the world. Damosel, said Galahad, ye have done so much that I shall be your knight all the days of my life.

Then they went from that ship, and went to the other. And anon the wind drove them into the sea a great pace. Then they landed on a sea shore; and so they came to a castle and passed by. So there came a knight armed after them and said: Lords, hark what I shall say to you. This gentlewoman that ye lead with you is she a maid? Sir, said she, a maid I am. Then he took her by the bridle and said: By the Holy Cross, ye shall not escape me to-fore ye have yolden the custom of this castle. Let her go, said Percivale, ye be not wise, for a maid in what place she cometh is free. So in the meanwhile there came out a ten or twelve knights armed, out of the castle, and with them came gentlewomen which held a dish of silver. And then they said: This gentlewoman must yield us the custom of

this castle. Sir, said a knight, what maid passeth hereby shall give this dish full of blood of her right arm. Blame have ye, said Galahad, that brought up such customs, and so God me save, I ensure you of this gentlewoman ye shall fail while that I live. So God me help, said Percivale, I had liefer be slain. And I also, said Sir Bors. By my troth, said a knight, then shall ye die, for ye may not endure against us though ye were the best knights of the world.

Then let they run each to other, and the three fellows beat the ten knights down and slew them. Then there came out of the castle a three score knights armed. Fair lords, said the three fellows, have mercy on yourself and have not ado with us. Nay, fair lords, said the knights of the castle, we counsel you to withdraw you. We will let you go with this harm, but we must needs have the custom. Certes, said Galahad, for nought speak ye. Well, said they, will ye die? We be not yet come thereto, said Galahad. Then began they to meddle together, and Galahad, with the strange girdles, drew his sword, and slew what that ever abode him, and did such marvels that there was none that saw him but weened he had been none earthly man. And his two fellows halp him passing well, and so they held the journey everych in like hard till it was night: then must they needs depart.

So came in a good knight, and said to the three fellows: If ye will come in to-night and take such harbour as here is ye shall be right welcome, and we shall ensure you by the faith of our bodies, to leave you in such estate to-morrow as we find you, without any falsehood.

And as soon as ye know of the custom we dare say ye will accord therefore. For God's love, said the gentlewoman, go thither and spare not for me. Go we, said Galahad; and so they entered into the chapel. And when they were alighted they made great joy of them. So within a while the three knights asked the custom of the castle and wherefore it was. What it is, said they, we will say you sooth. There is in this castle a gentlewoman which we and this castle is hers, and many other. So it befell many years agone there fell on her a malady, and of no leech she could have no remedy. But at the last an old man said an she might have a dish full of blood of a maid and a clean virgin in will and in work, and a king's daughter, that blood should be her health, and for to anoint her withal; and for this thing was the custom made. Now, said Percivale's sister, fair knights, I see well that this gentlewoman is but dead. Certes, said Galahad, an ye bleed so much ye may die. Truly, said she, an I die for to heal her I shall get me great worship and soul's health, and worship to my lineage, and better is one harm than twain. And therefore there shall be no more battle, but to-morn I shall yield you your custom of this castle. And then there was great joy more than there was to-fore, for else had there been mortal war upon the morn; notwithstanding she would none other, whether they wold or nold. That night were the three fellows eased with the best; and on the morn they heard mass, and Sir Percivale's sister bade bring forth the sick lady. So she was, the which was evil at ease. Then said she: Who shall let me blood? So one came forth and

let her blood, and she bled so much that the dish was full. Then she lift up her hand and blessed her; and then she said to the lady: Madam, I am come to the death for to make you whole, for God's love pray for me. With that she fell in a swoon. Then Galahad and his two fellows start up to her, and lift her up and staunched her, but she had bled so much that she might not live. Then she said when she was awaked: Fair brother Percivale, I die for the healing of this lady, so I require you that ye bury me not in this country, but as soon as I am dead put me in a boat at the next haven, and let me go as adventure will lead me; and as soon as ye three come to the City of Sarras, there to enchieve the Holy Grail, ye shall find me under a tower arrived, and there bury me in the spiritual place; for I say you so much, there Galahad shall be buried, and ye also, in the same place.

Then Percivale understood these words, and granted it her, weeping. Then asked she her Saviour; and as soon as she had received it the soul departed from the body. So the same day was the lady healed, when she was anointed withal. Then Sir Percivale made a letter of all that she had holpen them as in strange adventures, and put it in her right hand, and so laid her in a barge, and covered it with black silk, and so the wind arose, and drove the barge from the land, and all knights beheld it till it was out of their sight. Then said a voice: Lords and fellows, to-morrow at the hour of prime ye three shall depart everych from other, till the adventure bring you to the Maimed King. So the next day the three fellows departed and each adventured alone.

Now, saith the history, that when Launcelot was come to the water of Mortoise in his quest of the Sangreal, he laid him down to sleep, and took the adventure that God would send him. So when he was asleep there came a vision unto him and said: Launcelot, arise up and take thine armour, and enter into the first ship that thou shalt find. And when he heard these words he start up and saw great clearness about him. And then he lift up his hand and blessed him, and so took his arms and made him ready; and so by adventure he came by a strand, and found a ship the which was without sail or oar. And as soon as he was within the ship there he felt the most sweetness that ever he felt, and he was fulfilled with all thing that he thought on or desired. Then he said: Fair sweet Father, Jesu Christ, I wot not in what joy I am, for this joy passeth all earthly joys that ever I was in. And so in this joy he laid him down to the ship's board, and slept till day. And when he awoke he found therein a fair bed, and therein lying a gentlewoman dead, the which was Sir Percivale's sister. And as Launcelot devised her, he espied in her right hand a writ, the which he read, the which told him all the adventures ye have heard to-fore, and of what lineage she was come. So with this gentlewoman Sir Launcelot was a month and more. If ye would ask how he lived, He that fed the people of Israel with manna in the desert, so was he fed; for every day when he had said his prayers he was sustained with the grace of the Holy Ghost.

So on a night he went to play him by the water side, for he was somewhat weary of the ship. And then

he listened and heard an horse come, and one riding upon him. And when he came nigh he seemed a knight. And so he let him pass, and went thereas the ship was; and there he alighted, and took the saddle and the bridle and put the horse from him, and went into the ship. And then Launcelot dressed unto him, and said: Ye be welcome. And he answered and saluted him again, and asked him: What is your name? for much my heart giveth unto you. Truly, said he, my name is Launcelot du Lake. Sir, said he, then be ye welcome, for ye were the beginner of me in this world. Ah, said he, are ye Galahad? Yea, forsooth, said he; and so he kneeled down and asked him his blessing, and after took of his helm and kissed him. And there was great joy between them, for there is no tongue can tell the joy that they made either of other, and many a friendly word spoken between, as kin would, the which is no need here to be rehearsed.

Anon, as Galahad saw the gentlewoman dead in the bed, he knew her well enough, and told great worship of her, that she was the best maid living, and it was great pity of her death.

So dwelt Launcelot and Galahad within that ship half a year, and served God daily and nightly with all their power.

So after, on a Monday, it befell that they arrived in the edge of a forest to-fore a cross; and then saw they a knight armed all in white, and was richly horsed, and led in his right hand a white horse; and so he came to the ship, and saluted the two knights on the

High Lord's behalf, and said: Galahad, sir, ye have been long enough with your father, come out of the ship, and start upon this horse, and go where the adventures shall lead thee in the quest of the Sangreal. Then he went to his father and kissed him sweetly, and said: Fair sweet father, I wot not when I shall see you more till I see the body of Jesu Christ. I pray you, said Launcelot, pray ye to the High Father that he hold me in His service. And so he took his horse, and there they heard a voice that said: Think for to do well, for the one shall never see the other before the dreadful day of doom. Now, son Galahad, said Launcelot, since we shall depart, and never see other, I pray to the High Father to conserve me and you both. Sir, said Galahad, no prayer availeth so much as yours. And therewith Galahad entered into the forest.

Now, saith the story, Galahad rode many journeys in vain. And at the last he came to the abbey where King Mordrains was, and when he heard that, he thought he would abide and see him. For this king had prayed: Fair Lord, let me never die till the good knight of my blood of the ninth degree be come, that I may see him openly that he shall enchieve the Sangreal, that I may kiss him. And upon the morn, when he had heard mass, Galahad came unto King Mordrains, and anon the king saw him, which had lain blind of long time. And then he dressed him against him, and said: Galahad, the servant of Jesu Christ, whose coming I have abiden so long, now embrace me and let me rest on thy breast, for thou art a clean

SIR SAID GALAHAD NO PRAYER AVAILETH
SO MUCH AS YOURS

virgin above all knights, as the flower of the lily in whom virginity is signified, and thou art the rose the which is the flower of all good virtues, and in colour of fire. For the fire of the Holy Ghost is taken so in thee that my flesh which was all dead of oldness is become young again. Then Galahad heard his words, then he embraced him and all his body. Then said he: Fair Lord Jesu Christ, now I have my will. Now I require thee, in this point that I am in, thou come and visit me. And anon Our Lord heard his prayer: therewith the soul departed from the body.

And then Galahad put him in the earth as a king ought to be, and so departed. So on a day it befell that he met with Sir Percivale, and they rode till they came out of a great forest, and there they met at traverse with Sir Bors, the which rode alone. It is none need to tell if they were glad.

Then rode they a great while till that they came to the castle of Corbin; and when they were entered within the castle King Pelles knew them; then there was great joy, for they wist well by their coming that they had fulfilled the quest of the Sangreal.

And anon alighted a voice among them, and said: They that ought not to sit at the table of Jesu Christ arise, for now shall very knights be fed. So they went hence, all save King Pelles and his son, and a maid which was his niece. Anon they saw knights all armed came in at the hall door, and did off their helms and arms, and said unto Galahad: Sir, we have hied right much for to be with you at this table where the holy meat shall be departed. Then said he: Ye be welcome, but of whence

be ye? So three of them said they were of Gaul, and three said they were of Ireland, and the other three were of Denmark.

And therewithal beseemed them there came a man in likeness of a bishop; and it seemed that he had in midst of his forehead letters the which said: See ye here Joseph, the first bishop of Christendom, the same which our Lord succoured in the city of Sarras in the spiritual place. Then the knights marvelled for that bishop was dead more than three hundred year to-fore. O knights, said he, marvel not, for I was sometime an earthly man. And then the bishop made semblaunt as though he would have gone to the sacring of mass, and then he did that longed to a priest to do to a mass. And then he went to Galahad and kissed him, and bade him go and kiss his fellows. Now, said he, servants of Jesu Christ, ye shall be fed afore this table with sweet meats that never knights tasted. And when he had said, he vanished away.

Then looked they and saw a man come out of the Holy Vessel, that had all the signs of the passion of Jesu Christ, bleeding all openly, and said: My knights and my servants, and my true children, which be come out of deadly life into spiritual life, I will now no longer hide me from you, but ye shall see now a part of my secrets and of my hidden things: now hold and receive the high meat which ye have so much desired. Then took he himself the Holy Vessel and came to Galahad; and he kneeled down, and there he received his Saviour, and after him so received all his fellows; and they thought it so sweet that it was marvellous to tell. Then said he

to Galahad: And now hast thou seen that thou most desired to see, but yet hast thou not seen it so openly as thou shalt see it in the city of Sarras in the spiritual place. Therefore thou must go hence and bear with thee this Holy Vessel; for this night it shall depart from the realm of Logris, that it shall never be seen more here. And therefore go ye to-morrow unto the sea, where ye shall find your ship ready, and with you take the sword with the strange girdles, and no more with you but Sir Percivale and Sir Bors. Then gave he them his blessing and vanished away.

That same night about midnight came a voice among them which said: My sons and not my chief sons, my friends and not my warriors, go ye hence where ye hope best to do and as I bade you. Ah, thanked be Thou, Lord, that Thou wilt vouchsafe to call us, Thy sinners. Now may we well prove that we have not lost our pains. And anon in all haste the knights strangers took their harness and departed. But the three knights of Gaul, one of them hight Claudine, King Claudas' son, and the other two were great gentlemen.

Right so on the morn departed Galahad, Percivale and Bors with him; and so they rode three days, and then they came to a rivage, and found the ship whereof the tale speaketh of to-fore. And when they came to the board they found in the midst the table of silver which they had left with the Maimed King, and the Sangreal which was covered with red samite. Then were they glad to have such things in their fellowship; and so they entered and made great reverence there to; and Galahad fell in his prayer long time to Our Lord,

that at what time he asked, that he should pass out of this world.

So long were they in the ship that they said to Galahad: Sir, in this bed ought ye to lie, for so saith the scripture. And so he laid him down and slept a great while; and when he awaked he looked afore him and saw the city of Sarras. And as they would have landed they saw the ship wherein Percivale had put his sister in. Truly, said Percivale, well hath my sister holden us covenant. Then took they out of the ship the table of silver, and he took it to Percivale and Bors, to go to-fore, and Galahad came behind. And right so they went to the city, and at the gate they saw an old man crooked. Then Galahad called him and bade him help to bear this heavy thing. Truly, said the old man, it is ten years ago that I might not go but with crutches. Care thou not, said Galahad, and arise up and show thy good will. And so he assayed him, and found him as whole as ever he was. Then ran he to the table, and took one part against Galahad. And anon arose there great noise in the city, that a cripple was made whole by knights marvellous that entered into the city.

Then anon after, the three knights went to the water, and brought up into the palace Percivale's sister, and buried her as richly as a king's daughter ought to be. And when the king of the city, which was cleped Estorause, saw the fellowship, he asked them of whence they were, and what thing it was that they had brought upon the table of silver. And they told him the truth of the Sangreal, and the power that which God had sent there. Then the king was a tyrant, and was come of

the line of paynims, and took them and put them in prison in a deep hole.

But as soon as they were there Our Lord sent them the Sangreal, through whose grace they were always fulfilled while that they were in prison. So at the year's end it befell that this King Estorause lay sick, and felt that he should die. Then he sent for the three knights, and they came afore him; and he cried them mercy of that he had done to them, and they forgave it him goodly; and he died anon. When the king was dead all the city was dismayed, and wist not who might be their king. Right so as they were in counsel there came a voice among them, and bade them choose the youngest knight of them three to be their king: For he shall well maintain you and all yours. So they made Galahad king by all the assent of the holy city. And when he was come to behold the land, he let make above the table of silver a chest of gold and precious stones, that hilled the Holy Vessel. And every day early the three fellows would come afore it, and make their prayers.

Now at the year's end, and the self same day after Galahad had borne the crown of gold, he arose up early and his fellows, and came to the palace, and saw to-fore them the Holy Vessel, and a man kneeling on his knees in likeness of a bishop, that had about him a great fellowship of angels, as it had been Jesu Christ himself; and then he arose and began a mass of Our Lady. And when he came to the sacrament of the mass, and had done, anon he called Galahad, and said to him: Come forth thou servant of Jesu Christ, and thou shalt see that thou hast much desired to see. And then he began

to tremble right hard when the deadly flesh began to behold the spiritual things. Then he held up his hands to heaven and said: Lord, I thank thee, for now I see that hath been my desire many a day. Now, blessed Lord, would I not longer live, if it might please thee Lord. And therewith the good man took Our Lord's body betwixt his hands, and proffered it to Galahad, and he received it right gladly and meekly. Now wottest thou what I am? said the good man. Nay, said Galahad. I am Joseph of Aramathie, the which Our Lord hath sent to thee to bear thee fellowship; and wottest thou why he hath sent me more than any other? For thou hast resembled me in two things; in that thou hast seen the marvels of the Sangreal, in that thou hast been a clean maiden, as I have been and am.

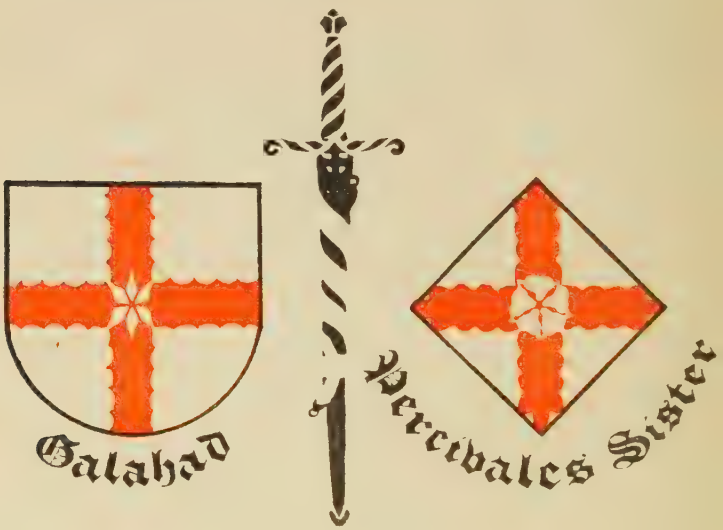
And when he had said these words Galahad went to Percivale and kissed him, and commended him to God; and so he went to Sir Bors and kissed him, and commended him to God, and said: Fair lord, salute me to my lord, Sir Launcelot, my father, and as soon as ye see him, bid him remember of this unstable world. And therewith he kneeled down to-fore the table and made his prayers, and then suddenly his soul departed to Jesu Christ, and a great multitude of angels bare his soul up to heaven, that the two fellows might well behold it. Also the two fellows saw come from heaven an hand, but they saw not the body. And then it came right to the Vessel, and so bare it up to heaven. Sithen was there never man so hardy to say that he had seen the Sangreal.

When Percivale and Bors saw Galahad dead they made as much sorrow as ever did two men. And if they

had not been good men they might lightly have fallen in despair. And the people of the country and the city were right heavy. And then he was buried; and as soon as he was buried Sir Percivale yielded him to an hermitage out of the city, and took a religious clothing. And Bors was always with him, but never changed he his secular clothing, for that he purposed him to go again into the realm of Logris. Thus a year and two months lived Sir Percivale in the hermitage a full holy life, and then passed out of this world; and Bors let bury him by his sister and by Galahad in the spiritualities.

When Bors saw that he was in so far countries as in the parts of Babylon he departed from Sarras, and armed him and came to the sea, and entered into a ship; and so it befell him in good adventure he came into the realm of Logris; and he rode so fast till he came to Camelot where the king was. And then was there great joy made of him in the court, for they weened all he had been dead. And when they had eaten, the king made great clerks to come afore him, that they should chronicle of the high adventures of the good knights, and Bors told him of the adventures of the Sangreal, such as had befallen him and his fellows. And anon Sir Bors said to Sir Launcelot: Galahad, your own son, saluted you by me, and after you King Arthur and all the court, and so did Sir Percivale, for I buried them with mine own hands in the city of Sarras. Also, Sir Launcelot, Galahad prayed you to remember of this unstable world, as ye behight him when ye were together more than half a year. Now I trust to God, said Launcelot, his prayer shall avail me.

Then Launcelot took Sir Bors in his arms, and said Gentle cousin, ye are right welcome to me, and all that ever I may do for you and for yours ye shall find my poor body ready at all times, while the spirit is in it, and that I promise you faithfully, and never to fail. And wit ye well, gentle cousin, Sir Bors, that ye and I will never depart asunder whilst our lives may last. Sir, said he, I will as ye will.



AH MY FAIR LORD·SAID SIR LAUNCELOT·
JESU WOULD THAT I MIGHT HELP YOU

XI

SIR URRE'S MOTHER

She ledde hym seven yere thurgh alle landes crystened /

IN the land of Hungary there lived a noble dame, and she had one beloved son named Sir Urre of the Mount. So it befell, that this Sir Urre, knight of Hungary, slew Sir Alphegus, an earl's son of Spain ; but this knight, or ever he was slain, gave Sir Urre seven great wounds, three on the head, three on the body, and one on his left hand. And this Sir Alphegus had a mother, the which was a great sorceress ; and she, for the despite of her son's death, wrought that Sir Urre should never be whole, but ever his wounds should one time fester

and another time bleed, until the best knight of the world had searched them.

Then Sir Urre's mother let make an horse-litter, and put him therein; and then she took Sir Urre's sister with him, a full fair damosel; and then she took a page with him to keep their horses. And so for seven years she led him through all lands christened, and never she could find no knight that might ease her son. So by fortune she came, nigh the feast of Pentecost, until King Arthur's court, that at that time was holden at Carlisle. And there she made it openly to be known how that she was come into that land for to heal her son.

Then King Arthur let call that lady, and asked her why she brought that hurt knight into that land. My most noble king, said she, wit ye well I brought my son hither for to be healed of his wounds, that of all this seven year he might not be whole. Then she told the king where he was wounded, and of whom; and how the mother of Sir Alphegus had made known in her pride how she had wrought by enchantment that Sir Urre should never be whole until the best knight of the world had searched him. And so I have passed through all lands christened, said she, to have my son healed, except this land. And if I fail to heal him here, I will never take more pain upon me, and that is pity, for he was a good knight and of great nobleness.

Sith ye are come into this land, said King Arthur, ye are right welcome; and wit ye well here shall your son be healed, an ever any Christian man may heal him. And wit ye well, said the king, to Sir Urre's sister, I shall

begin to handle him, not presuming that I am so worthy to heal him by my deeds, but I will courage other men of worship to do as I do.

So all the knights of the Round Table at that time at court were assembled in the meadow of Carlisle. Many noble knights ; Sir Constantine of Cornwall, that was king after Arthur's days, Sir Gawaine of Orkney, son to King Arthur's sister, with his brothers, Agravaine, Gaheris, Mordred, and the gentle Sir Gareth, that was of very knighthood worth all the brethren, Sir Pelleas the Lover, that wedded Nimue, Sir Bellangere le Beuse, son to Sir Alisander le Orphelin and Alice La Beale Pilgrim, Sir Ironside, that was called the noble Knight of the Red Launds, that Sir Gareth won for the love of Dame Lionesse. Then came knights of Sir Launcelot's kin, and many other knights and kings to the number of an hundred and ten. And after King Arthur, all these searched Sir Urre's wounds.

Mercy Jesu, said King Arthur, where is Sir Launcelot du Lake that he is not here at this time ? Thus, as they stood and spake of many things, there was espied Sir Launcelot that came riding towards them. So when Sir Launcelot espied King Arthur, he descended from his horse and came to the king. Anon as the maid, Sir Urre's sister, saw Sir Launcelot, she ran to her brother thereas he lay in his litter. Brother, said she, here is come a knight that my heart giveth greatly unto. Fair sister, said Sir Urre, so doth my heart light against him, and certainly I hope now to be healed, for my heart giveth to him more than to all these that have searched me.

Then King Arthur said to Sir Launcelot: Ye must do as we have done; and told him what they had done, and showed him all those that had searched Sir Urre's wounds. Jesu defend me, said Sir Launcelot, when so many kings and knights have essayed and failed, that I should presume upon me to enchieve that all ye, my lords, might not enchieve. Ye shall not choose, said King Arthur, for I will command you for to do as we all have done. And ye shall not do it for no presumption, but for to bear us fellowship, insomuch ye be a fellow of the Table Round.

And then the wounded knight, Sir Urre, set him up weakly, and prayed Sir Launcelot heartily, saying: Fair courteous knight, I require thee for God's sake heal my wounds, for methinks ever sithen ye came here my wounds grieve me not. Ah, my fair lord, said Sir Launcelot, Jesu would that I might help you; but never was I able in worthiness to do so high a thing. Then Sir Launcelot kneeled down by the wounded knight saying: My lord Arthur, I must do your commandment, the which is sore against my will. Then he held up his hands, and looked into the east, saying secretly unto himself: Thou blessed Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I beseech thee of thy mercy, that my simple worship and honesty be saved, and thou blessed Trinity, thou mayst give power to heal this sick knight by thy great virtue and grace of thee, but, Good Lord, never of myself.

Then he prayed Sir Urre to let him see his wounds, and he searched each wound in turn so that it bleed a little; and every wound healed clean.

Then, says the romancer, King Arthur and all the kings and knights kneeled down and gave thankings and lovings unto God and to His Blessed Mother. And ever Sir Launcelot wept as he were a child that had been beaten.

Then King Arthur let array priests and clerks in the most devoutest manner, to bring Sir Urre within Carlisle, with singing and loving unto God. And when this was done, the king let clothe him in the richest manner that could be thought, and then there were but few better made knights in all the court, for he was passingly well made and bigly.

Then King Arthur asked Sir Urre how he felt himself. My good lord, said he, I felt myself never so lusty. Will ye joust and do deeds of arms? said the king. Sir, said Urre, an I had all that longed unto jousts I would be soon ready.

Then Arthur made a party of an hundred knights to be against an hundred knights. And so upon the morn they jousted for a diamond, but there jousted none of the proved knights. And Sir Urre and Sir Lavaine, brother to the Fair Maid of Astolat, jousted best that day; and then by the assent of all, Sir Urre and Sir Lavaine were made knights of the Table Round. And Sir Lavaine cast his love unto Sir Urre's fair sister, and then they were wedded together with great joy. And this Sir Urre would never go from Sir Launcelot, but he and Sir Lavaine awaited evermore upon him. And they were in all the court accounted for good knights, and full desirous in arms; and many noble deeds they did as the books record, for they would have no rest

but ever sought adventures. And thus they lived in that court with great noblesse and joy long time, and King Arthur gave to everych of them a barony of lands.

SIR LAUNCELOT SWORE EVER TO BE THE QUEENS KNIGHT IN RIGHT OR IN WRONG

XII

GUENEVER

Whyle she lyved she was a true lover / and therfor she had a good ende

AND thus it passed on from Candlemas until after Easter, that the month of May was come, when every lusty heart beginneth to blossom, and to bring forth fruit ; for like as herbs and trees bring forth fruit and flourish in May, in like wise every lusty heart, that is in any manner a lover, springeth and flourisheth in lusty deeds. For it giveth unto all lovers courage, that lusty month of May, in something to constrain him to some manner of thing more in that month than

in any other month, for divers causes. For then all herbs and trees renew a man and woman, and likewise lovers call again to their mind old gentleness and old service, and many kind deeds that were forgotten by negligence. For like as winter rasure doth alway arase and deface green summer, so fareth it by unstable love in man and woman. For in many persons there is no stability; for we may see all day, for a little blast of winter's rasure, anon we shall deface and lay apart true love for little or nought, that cost much thing; this is no wisdom or stability, but it is feebleness of nature and great disworship, whosomever useth this. Therefore like as May month flowereth and flourisheth in many gardens, so in like wise let every man of worship flourish his heart in this world, first unto God, and next unto the joy of them that he promised his faith unto; for there was never worshipful man or worshipful woman, but they loved one better than another; and worship in arms may never be foiled, but first reserve the honour to God, and secondly the quarrel must come of thy lady: and such love I call virtuous love.

But nowadays men can not love seven nights but they must have all their desires: that love may not endure by reason; for where they be soon accorded and hasty heat, soon it cooleth. Right so fareth love nowadays, soon hot soon cold; this is no stability. But the old love was not so; men and women could love together seven years, and no wanton lusts were between them, and then was love truth and faithfulness: and lo, in like wise was used love in King Arthur's days. Wherefore I liken love nowadays unto summer and

winter; for like as the one is hot and the other cold, so fareth love nowadays. Therefore all ye that be lovers call unto your remembrance the month of May, like as did Queen Guenever, for whom I make here a little mention, that while she lived she was a true lover, and therefore she had a good end.

Now some romancers say that Sir Launcelot du Lake not Merlin went as King Arthur's messenger to King Leodegrance of Cameliard, and told him of the king's desire to wed Guenever his daughter. And some say that Guenever, when she first had sight of him, thought that Sir Launcelot du Lake was King Arthur, and set her heart upon him then. Thus she could never after withdraw her love. But we do not read of this in the *Morte d'Arthur*. There we read that Launcelot came to court seeking to be made knight of the Round Table. And on the day he should have been made knight he lost his sword, and the queen found it, and gave it him when he had the greatest need of it. And for that service he promised her that day, ever to be her knight in right or in wrong. And since Arthur loved jousts and tournaments and his noble fellowship of the Table Round better than any woman in the world, the queen turned, as time passed, more and more to Launcelot. For the book says she held him in great favour above all other, and in certain he loved the queen again above all other ladies and damosels of his life. And the most part of his worship he won for her sake.

So in the month of May when every lusty heart flourisheth and bourgeoneth—for as the season is lusty to behold and comfortable, so man and woman rejoice

and gladden of summer coming with his fresh flowers: for winter with his rough winds and blasts causeth a lusty man and woman to cower, and sit fast by the fire—so in this season befell a great anger and mishap that stinted not till the flower of chivalry of all the world was destroyed and slain; and all was long of two unhappy knights, the which were named Agravaine and Sir Mordred, that were brethren unto Sir Gawaine. For this Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred had ever a privy hate unto the queen Dame Guenever and to Sir Launcelot, and daily and nightly they ever watched upon Sir Launcelot.

So it mishapped, Sir Gawaine and all his brethren were in King Arthur's chamber; and then Sir Agravaine said thus openly, and not in no counsel, that many knights might hear it: I marvel that we all be not ashamed both to see and to know how Sir Launcelot goeth with the queen, and all we know it so; and it is shamefully suffered of us all, that we all should suffer so noble a king as King Arthur is so to be shamed.

Then spake Sir Gawaine and said: Brother Sir Agravaine, I pray you and charge you move no such matters no more afore me; for wit you well, said Sir Gawaine, I will not be of your counsel. So God me help, said Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, we will not be knowing, brother Agravaine, of your deeds. Then will I, said Sir Mordred. I lieve well that, said Sir Gawaine, for ever unto all unhappiness, brother Sir Mordred, thereto will ye grant; and I would that ye left all this, for I know what will fall of it. Fall of it what fall may, said Sir Agravaine, I will disclose it to the

king. Not by my counsel, said Sir Gawaine, for an there arise war and wrack betwixt Sir Launcelot and us, wit you well brother, there will many kings and great lords hold with Sir Launcelot. Also, ye must remember how ofttimes Sir Launcelot hath rescued the king and queen; and the best of us all had been full cold at the heart-root had not Sir Launcelot been better than we. And as for my part, I will never be against Sir Launcelot for one day's deed, when he rescued me from King Carados of the Dolorous Tower, and slew him, and saved my life. Also, brother Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred, in like wise Sir Launcelot rescued you both, and threescore and two from Sir Turquin. Methinketh, brother, such kind deeds and kindness should be remembered. Do as ye list, said Sir Agravaine, for I will hide it no longer. With these words came to them King Arthur. Now brother, stint your noise, said Sir Gawaine. We will not, said Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred. Will ye so? said Sir Gawaine; then God speed you, for I will not hear your tales ne be of your counsel. No more will I, said Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris, for we will never say evil by that man. And therewithal they three departed, making great dole.

And then Sir Arthur asked them what noise they made. My lord, said Agravaine, I shall tell you that I may keep no longer. Here is I, and my brother Sir Mordred, brake unto my brothers Sir Gawaine, Sir Gaheris, and to Sir Gareth, how this we know all, that Sir Launcelot holdeth your queen, and hath done long; and we be your sister's sons, and we may suffer it no

longer, and all we wot that ye should be above Sir Launcelot; and ye are the king that made him knight, and therefore we will prove it that he is a traitor to your person.

If it be so, said Sir Arthur, wit you well he is none other, but I would be loath to begin such a thing but I might have proofs upon it; for Sir Launcelot is the best knight among us all; and but if he be taken with the deed, he will fight with him that bringeth up the noise, and I know no knight that is able to match him. For as the French book saith, the king was full loath thereto, that any noise should be upon Sir Launcelot and his queen; for the king had a deeming, but he would not hear of it, for Sir Launcelot had done so much for him and the queen so many times, that wit ye well the king loved him passingly well. My lord, said Sir Agravaine, ye shall ride to-morn a-hunting, and doubt ye not Sir Launcelot will not go with you. Then when it draweth towards night, ye may send the queen word that ye will lie out all that night, and so may ye send for your cooks, and then upon pain of death we shall take him that night, and outher we shall bring him to you dead or quick. I will well, said the king; but I counsel you take with you sure fellowship, for I warn you ye shall find him wight. Let us deal, said Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred.

So on the morn King Arthur rode a-hunting, and sent word to the queen that he would be out all that night. Then Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred gat to them twelve knights of the Round Table, and hid themselves in a chamber in the castle of Carlisle, and all

they were of Sir Gawaine's kin, outher well-willers to his brethren.

So when the night came, Sir Launcelot told Sir Bors how he would go and speak with the queen. Sir, said Sir Bors, ye shall not go this night by my counsel. Why? said Sir Launcelot. Sir, said Sir Bors, I dread me ever of Sir Agravaine, that waiteth you daily to do you shame and us all; and never gave my heart against no going, that ever ye went to the queen, so much as now; for I mistrust that the king is out this night from the queen because peradventure he hath lain some watch for you and the queen, and therefore I dread me sore of treason. Have ye no dread, said Sir Launcelot, for I shall go and come again, and make no tarrying. Sir, said Sir Bors, that me repenteth, for I dread me sore that your going out this night shall wrath us all. Fair nephew, said Sir Launcelot, I marvel much why ye say thus, sithen the queen hath sent for me; and wit ye well I will not be so much a coward, but she shall understand I will see her good grace. God speed you well, said Sir Bors, and send you sound and safe again.

So Sir Launcelot departed, and took his sword under his arm, and so in his mantle that noble knight put himself in great jeopardy; and so he passed till he came to the queen's chamber. And then, as the French book saith, there came Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred, with twelve knights with them, and they said with crying voice: Traitor-knight, Sir Launcelot du Lake, now art thou taken. And thus they cried with a loud voice, that all the court might hear it; and they all fourteen were armed at all points as they should fight in a battle.

Alas, said Queen Guenever, now are we mischieved both. Madam, said Sir Launcelot, is there here any armour within your chamber, that I might cover my poor body withal? An if there be any give it me, and I shall soon stint their malice, by the grace of God. Truly, said the queen, I have none armour, shield, sword nor spear; wherefore I dread me sore our long love is come to a mischievous end, for I hear by their noise there be many noble knights, and well I wot they be surely armed; against them ye may make no resistance. Wherefore ye are likely to be slain, and then shall I be brent. For an ye might escape them, I would not doubt but that ye would rescue me in what danger that ever I stood in. Alas, said Sir Launcelot, in all my life thus was I never bestead, that I should be thus shamefully slain for lack of mine armour.

But ever in one Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred cried. Traitor-knight, come out of the queen's chamber, for wit thou well thou art so beset that thou shalt not escape. O Jesu mercy, said Sir Launcelot, this shameful cry and noise I may not suffer, for better were death at once than thus to endure this pain. Then he took the queen in his arms and kissed her, and said: Most noble Christian queen, I beseech you as ye have been ever my special good lady, and I at all times your true poor knight unto my power, and as I have never failed you in right nor in wrong sithen the first day King Arthur made me knight, that ye will pray for my soul if that I here be slain; for well I am assured that Sir Bors, and all the remnant of my kin, with Sir Lavaine and Sir Urre, that they will

not fail to rescue you from the fire; and therefore mine own lady, recomfort yourself, whatsomever come of me, that ye go with Sir Bors, my nephew and Sir Urre, and they will do you all the pleasure that they can or may, that ye shall live like a queen upon my lands. Nay, Launcelot, said the queen, wit thou well I will never live after thy days, but an thou be slain I will take my death as meekly for Jesu Christ's sake as ever did any Christian queen. Well, madam, said Launcelot, sith it is so that the day is come that our love must depart, wit ye well I shall sell my life as dear as I may; and a thousandfold, I am more heavier for you than for myself. And now I had liefer than to be lord of all Christendom, that I had sure armour upon me, that men might speak of my deeds or ever I were slain. Truly, said the queen, I would an it might please God that they would take me and slay me, and suffer you to escape. That shall never be, said Sir Launcelot, God defend me from such a shame, but Jesu be Thou my shield and mine armour!

And therewith Sir Launcelot wrapped his mantle about his arm well and surely; and by then they had gotten a great form out of the hall, and therewithal they rashed at the door. Fair lords, said Sir Launcelot, leave your noise and your rashing, and I shall set open this door, and then may ye do with me what it liketh you. Come off then, said they all, and do it, for it availeth thee not to strive against us all; and therefore let us into this chamber, and we shall save thy life until thou come to King Arthur. Then Launcelot unbarred the door, and with his left hand he held it

open a little, so that but one man might come in at once ; and so there came striding a good knight, a much man and large, and his name was Colgrevance of Gore, and he with a sword struck at Sir Launcelot mightily ; and he put aside the stroke, and gave him such a buffet upon the helmet, that he fell grovelling dead within the chamber door. And then Sir Launcelot with great might drew that dead knight within the chamber door ; and Sir Launcelot with help of the queen and her ladies was lightly armed in Sir Colgrevance's armour.

And ever stood Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred crying : Traitor-knight, come out of the queen's chamber. Leave your noise, said Sir Launcelot unto Sir Agravaine, for wit you well, Sir Agravaine, ye shall not prison me this night ; and therefore an ye do by my counsel, go ye all from this chamber door, and make not such crying and such manner of slander as ye do ; for I promise you by my knighthood, an ye will depart and make no more noise, I shall as to-morn appear afore you all before the king, and then let it be seen which of you all, outher else ye all, that will accuse me of treason ; and there I shall answer you as a knight should, that hither I came to the queen for no manner of mal engin, and that will I prove and make it good upon you with my hands. Fie on thee, traitor, said Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred, we will have thee maugre thy head, and slay thee if we list ; for we let thee wit we have the choice of King Arthur, to save thee or to slay thee. Ah, sirs, said Sir Launcelot, is there none other grace with you ? then keep yourselves.

So then Sir Launcelot set all open the chamber door, and mightily and knightly he strode in amongst them ;

and anon at the first buffet he slew Sir Agravaine. And twelve of his fellows, within a little while after, he laid them cold to the earth, for there was none of the twelve that might stand Sir Launcelot one buffet. Also Sir Launcelot wounded Sir Mordred, and he fled with all his might. And then Sir Launcelot returned again unto the queen, and said: Madam, now wit you well all our true love is brought to an end, for now will King Arthur ever be my foe; therefore madam, an it like you that I may have you with me, I shall save you from all manner adventures dangerous. That is not best, said the queen: meseemeth now ye have done so much harm, it will be best ye hold you still with this. And if ye see that as to-morn they will put me unto the death, then may ye rescue me as ye think best. I will well, said Sir Launcelot, for have ye no doubt, while I am living I shall rescue you. And then he kissed her, and either gave other a ring; and so there he left the queen, and went to his lodging.

When Sir Bors saw Sir Launcelot he was never so glad of his home-coming as he was then. Mercy, said Sir Launcelot, why be ye all armed: what meaneth this? Sir, said Sir Bors, we all deemed that ye were betrapped with some treason, and therefore we made us thus ready, what need that ever ye were in.

My fair nephew, said Sir Launcelot, now shall ye wit all, that this night I was more harder bestead than ever I was in my life, and yet I escaped. And so he told them all how and in what manner, as ye have heard tofore. And therefore my fellows, said Sir Launcelot, I pray you all that ye will be of good heart in what need

somever I stand, for now is war come to us. Sir, said Sir Bors, all is welcome that God sendeth us, and we have had much weal with you and much worship, and therefore we will take the woe with you as we have taken the weal. And therefore they said all (there were many good knights), look ye take no discomfort, for there nis no band of knights under heaven but we shall be able to grieve tham as much as they may us. And therefore, Sir Launcelot, said they, we will take the woe with the weal. Gramercy, said Sir Launcelot, of your good comfort, for in my great distress, my fair nephew, ye comfort me greatly, and much I am beholding unto you. But this I would that ye did in all haste that ye may, that ye will look in their lodging that be lodged here nigh about the king, which will hold with me, and which will not, for now I would know which were my friends from my foes. Sir, said Sir Bors, I will do my pain, and or it be seven of the clock I shall wit who will hold with you.

Then Sir Bors called unto him many noble knights to the number of four score, and all these held with Sir Launcelot. My lords, said Sir Launcelot, when they were come together, wit you well, I have been ever since I came into this country well willed unto my lord, King Arthur, and unto my lady, Queen Guenever, unto my power; and this night because my lady the queen sent for me to speak with her, I suppose it was made by treason, howbeit I dare largely excuse her person, notwithstanding I was there by a forecast near slain, but as Jesu provided me I escaped all their malice and treason. And then that noble knight Sir Launcelot told them all

how he was hard bestead in the queen's chamber. And therefore, said Sir Launcelot, wit ye well my fair lords there nis but war to me and mine. And for because I have slain these knights, for this cause now I am sure of mortal war, for these knights were sent and ordained by King Arthur to betray me. And therefore the king will in his heat and malice judge the queen to the fire, and that may I not suffer that she should be brent for my sake; for an I may be heard and suffered and so taken, I will fight for the queen, that she is a true lady unto her lord; but the king in his heat, I dread me, will not take me as I ought to be taken.

My lord, Sir Launcelot, said Sir Bors, by mine advice ye shall take the woe with the weal, and take it in patience, and thank God of it. And sithen it is fallen as it is, I counsel you keep yourself, for an ye will yourself, there is no fellowship of knights christened that shall do you wrong. Also I will counsel you my lord, than an my lady, Queen Guenever, be in distress, insomuch as she is in pain for your sake, that ye knightly rescue her; an ye did otherwise, all the world will speak of you shame to the world's end. Insomuch as ye were taken with her, whether ye did right or wrong, it is now your part to hold with the queen, that she be not slain; for an she so die the shame shall be yours. Jesu defend me from shame, said Sir Launcelot, and keep and save my lady the queen from villainy and shameful death, and that she never be destroyed in my default; wherefore my fair lords, my kin, and my friends, what will ye do? Then they said all: We will do as ye will do. I put this to you, said Sir Launcelot, that if my

lord Arthur by evil counsel will to-morn in his heat put my lady the queen to the fire there to be brent, now I pray you counsel me what is best to do. Then they said all at once with one voice: Sir, us thinketh best that ye knightly rescue the queen; insomuch as she shall be brent it is for your sake, and it is to suppose, an ye might be handled, ye should have the same death, or a more shamefuller. And sir, we say all, that ye have many times rescued her from death for other men's quarrels, us seemeth it is more your worship, that ye rescue the queen from this peril, insomuch as she hath it for your sake.

Then Sir Launcelot stood still, and said: My fair lords, wit ye well I would be loath to do that thing that should dishonour you or my blood, and wit ye well I would be loath that my lady, the queen, should die a shameful death; but I must do much harm ere I rescue her; and peradventure I shall there destroy some of my best friends, that should much repent me; and peradventure there be some, an they could bring it about, or disobey my lord King Arthur, they would soon come to me, the which I were loath to hurt. And if so be that I rescue her, where shall I keep her? That shall be the least care of us all, said Sir Bors. How did the noble knight Sir Tristram, by your good will? kept not he with him La Beale Isoud near three year in Joyous Gard? and that same place is your own; and in Joyous Gard ye may keep my lady the queen long enough until the heat of the king be past. And then shall ye bring again the queen to the king with great worship; and then peradventure ye shall have thank

for her bringing home, and love and thank where other shall have maugre.

So to make short tale, they were all consented that for better or for worse, if so were that the queen were on that morn brought to the fire, shortly they all would rescue her. And so by the advice of Sir Launcelot, they put them all in an embushment in a wood, as nigh Carlisle as they might, and there they abode still, to wit what the king would do.

Now turn we again unto Sir Mordred that rode unto King Arthur, sore wounded and smitten, and all forbled; and there he told the king all how it was, and how they were all slain save himself. Jesu mercy, how may this be? said the king; took ye him in the queen's chamber? Yea, so God me help, said Sir Mordred, there we found him unarmed, and there he slew Colgrevance, and armed him in his armour; and all this he told the king from the beginning to the ending. Jesu mercy, said the king, he is a marvellous knight of prowess. Alas, me sore repenteth that ever Sir Launcelot should be against me. Now I am sure the noble fellowship of the Round Table is broken for ever, for with him will many a noble knight hold; and now it is fallen so that I may not with my worship, but the queen must suffer the death. For the law was such in those days that whatsomever they were, of what estate or degree, if they were found guilty of treason, there should be none other remedy but death. And right so it was ordained for Queen Guenever, because Sir Mordred was escaped sore wounded, and the death of thirteen knights of the Round Table. These proofs and

experiences caused King Arthur to command the queen to the fire there to be brent.

Then spake Sir Gawaine, and said: My lord Arthur, I would counsel you not to be over-hasty, but that ye would put it in respite, this judgment of my lady the queen, for many causes. One it is, though it were so that Sir Launcelot were found in the queen's chamber, yet it might be so that he came thither for none evil; for ye know, my lord, that the queen is much beholden unto Sir Launcelot, more than unto any other knight, for ofttimes he hath saved her life, and done battle for her when all the court refused the queen; and peradventure she sent for him for goodness and for none evil, to reward him for his good deeds that he had done to her in times past. And peradventure my lady, the queen, sent for him to that intent that Sir Launcelot should come to her good grace privily and secretly, weening to her that it was best so to do, in eschewing and dreading of slander; for ofttimes we do many things that we ween it be for the best, and yet peradventure it turneth to the worst. For I dare say my lady, your queen, is to you both good and true; and as for Sir Launcelot I dare say he will make it good upon any knight living that will put upon himself villainy or shame, and in like wise he will make good for my lady, Dame Guenever.

That I believe well, said King Arthur, but I will not that way with Sir Launcelot, for he trusteth so much upon his might that he doubteth no man; and therefore for my queen he shall never fight more, for she shall have the law. And if I may get Sir Launcelot, wit you well he shall have a shameful death. Jesu defend, said Sir

Gawaine, that I may never see it. Why say ye so? said King Arthur; forsooth ye have no cause to love Sir Launcelot, for this night last past he slew your brother, Sir Agravaine, a full good knight, and almost he had slain your other brother, Sir Mordred. My lord, said Sir Gawaine, of all this I have knowledge, of whose death I repent me sore; but insomuch I gave them warning, and told my brethren aforehand what would fall in the end, insomuch they would not do by my counsel, I will not meddle me thereof, nor revenge me; for I told them it was no bote to strive with Sir Launcelot; for oft times I warned my brother Sir Agravaine, and I told him the perils the which be now fallen.

Then said the noble King Arthur to Sir Gawaine: Dear nephew, I pray you make you ready in your best armour, with your brethren, Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, to bring my queen to the fire, there to have her judgment and receive the death. Nay, my most noble lord, said Sir Gawaine, that will I never do; for wit you well I will never be in that place where so noble a queen as is my lady, Dame Guenever, shall take a shameful end. For wit you well my heart will never serve me to see her die; and it shall never be said that ever I was of your counsel of her death.

Then said the king: Suffer your brothers Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth to be there. My lord, said Sir Gawaine, wit you well they will be loath to be there present, because of many adventures the which be like there to fall, but they are young and full unable to say you nay. Then spake Sir Gaheris, and the good knight Sir Gareth, unto Sir Arthur: Sir, ye may well command us to be

there, but wit you well it shall be sore against our will; but an we be there by your strait commandment ye shall plainly hold us there excused: we will be there in peaceable wise, and bear none harness of war upon us. In the name of God, said the king, then make you ready, for she shall soon have her judgment anon. Alas, said Sir Gawaine, that ever I should endure to see this woeful day. So Sir Gawaine turned him and wept heartily, and so he went to his chamber; and then the queen was led forth without Carlisle, and there she was despoiled into her smock. And so then her ghostly father was brought to her, to be shriven of her misdeeds. Then was there weeping, and wailing, and wringing of hands, of many lords and ladies, but there were but few in comparison that would bear any armour for to strength the death of the queen.

Then was there one that Sir Launcelot had sent unto that place for to espy what time the queen should go unto her death; and anon as he saw the queen despoiled into her smock, and so shriven, then he gave Sir Launcelot warning. Then was there but spurring and plucking up of horses, and right so they came to the fire. And who that stood against them, there were they slain; there might none withstand Sir Launcelot, so all that bare arms and withstood them, there were they slain, full many a noble knight. And so in this rashing and hurling, as Sir Launcelot thrang here and there, it mishapped him to slay Gaheris and Sir Gareth, the noble knight, for they were unarmed and unware. For as the French book saith, Sir Launcelot saw them not, and so were they found dead among the thickest of the press.

Then when Sir Launcelot had thus done, and slain and put to flight all that would withstand him, then he rode straight unto Dame Guenever, and made a kirtle and a gown to be cast upon her; and then he made her to be set behind him, and prayed her to be of good cheer. Wit you well the queen was glad that she had escaped from the death; and then she thanked God and Sir Launcelot. And so he rode his way with the queen, as the French book saith, unto Joyous Gard, and there he kept her as a noble knight should do.

So turn we again unto King Arthur, that when it was told him how the queen was taken away from the fire, and when he heard of the death of his noble knights, and in especial of Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth's death, then the king swooned for pure sorrow. And when he awoke of his swoon, then he said: Alas, that ever I bare crown upon my head! for now have I lost the fairest fellowship of noble knights that ever Christian king held together. Alas, my good knights be slain away from me; now within these two days I have lost forty knights, and also the noble fellowship of Sir Launcelot and his blood, for now I may never hold them together no more with my worship. Alas, that ever this war began. Now, fair fellows, I charge you that no man tell Sir Gawaine of the death of his two brethren; for I am sure when Sir Gawaine heareth tell that Sir Gareth is dead he will go nigh out of his mind. Mercy Jesu, said the king, why slew he Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris, for I dare say as for Sir Gareth he loved Sir Launcelot above all men earthly. That is truth, said some knights, but they were slain in the hurtling as Sir Launcelot thrang in the thick

of the press ; and as they were unarmed he smote them and wist not whom that he smote, and so unhappily they were slain. The death of them, said Arthur, will cause the greatest mortal war that ever was ; I am sure, wist Sir Gawaine that Sir Gareth were slain, I should never have rest of him till I had destroyed Sir Launcelot's kin and himself both, or else he to destroy me. And therefore wit you well my heart was never so heavy as it is now, and much more am I sorrier for my good knights' loss than for the loss of my fair queen ; for queens I might have enow, but such a fellowship of good knights shall never be together in no company. And now I dare say, said King Arthur, there was never Christian king held such a fellowship together. Ah, Agravaine, Agravaine, Jesu forgive it thy soul, for thine evil will, that thou and thy brother Sir Mordred, hadst unto Sir Launcelot, hath caused all this sorrow : and ever among these complaints the king wept and swooned.

Then there came one unto Sir Gawaine, and told him how the queen was led away with Sir Launcelot, and nigh a twenty-four knights slain. O Jesu defend my brethren, said Sir Gawaine, for full well wist I that Sir Launcelot would rescue her, outher else he would die in that field. But where are my brethren ? I marvel I hear not of them. Truly, said that man, Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris be slain. Jesu defend, said Sir Gawaine, for all the world I would not that they were slain, and in especial my good brother, Sir Gareth. Sir, said the man, he is slain, and that is great pity. Who slew him ? said Sir Gawaine. Sir, said the man,

Launcelot slew them both. That may I not believe, said Sir Gawaine, that ever he slew my brother, Sir Gareth; for I dare say my brother Gareth loved him better then me, and all his brethren, and the king both. Also I dare say, an Sir Launcelot had desired my brother, Sir Gareth, with him he would have been with him against the king and us all, and therefore I may never believe that Sir Launcelot slew my brother. Sir, said this man, it is noised that he slew him.

Alas, said Sir Gawaine, now is my joy gone. And right so Sir Gawaine ran to the king crying and weeping: O King Arthur, mine uncle, my good brother Sir Gareth is slain, and so is my brother Sir Gaheris, the which were two noble knights. Then the king wept and he both; and so they fell a-swooning. And when they were revived then spake Sir Gawaine: Sir, I will go see my brother, Sir Gareth. Ye may not see him, said the king, for I caused him to be interred and Sir Gaheris both; for well I understood that ye would make over much sorrow, and the sight of Sir Gareth should have caused you double sorrow. Alas, my lord, said Sir Gawaine, how slew he my brother, Sir Gareth? Mine own good lord I pray you tell me. Truly, said the king, I shall tell you how it is told me, Sir Launcelot slew him and Sir Gaheris both. Alas, said Sir Gawaine, they bare none arms against him, neither of them both. I wot not how it was, said the king, but as it is said, Sir Launcelot slew them both in the thickest of the press and knew them not.

My king, my lord, and mine uncle, said Sir Gawaine, wit you well now I shall make you a promise that I shall

hold by my knighthood, that from this day I shall never fail Sir Launcelot, until the one of us have slain the other. For I promise unto God, said Sir Gawaine, for the death of my brother, Sir Gareth, I shall seek Sir Launcelot throughout seven kings' realms, but I shall slay him or else he shall slay me. Ye shall not need to seek him so far, said the king, for as I hear say, Sir Launcelot will abide me and you in the Joyous Gard ; and much people draweth unto him, as I hear say. That may I believe, said Sir Gawaine, but my lord assay your friends and I will assay mine. It shall be done, said the king, and as I suppose I shall be big enough to draw him out of the biggest tower of his castle.

Then came King Arthur with Sir Gawaine with an huge host, and laid a seige all about Joyous Gard, both at the town and at the castle, and there they made strong war on both parties. But in no wise Sir Launcelot would ride out, of long time ; neither he would none of his good knights to issue out, neither none of the town nor of the castle, until fifteen weeks were past.

Then it befell upon a day in harvest time, Sir Launcelot looked over the walls, and spake on high unto King Arthur and Sir Gawaine : My lords both, wit ye well all is in vain that ye make at this siege, for here win ye no worship but maugre and dishonour ; for an it list me to come myself out and my good knights, I should full soon make an end of this war. Come forth, said Arthur, an thou durst, and I promise thee I shall meet thee in midst of the field. God defend me, said Sir Launcelot, that ever I should encounter with the most noble king that made me knight. Fie

upon thy fair language, said the king, for wit you well and trust it, I am thy mortal foe, and ever will to my death day; for thou hast slain my good knights, and full noble men of my blood, that I shall never recover again. Also thou hast dishonoured my queen, and holden her many winters, and sithen like a traitor taken her from me by force.

My most noble lord and king, said Sir Launcelot, ye may say what ye will, for ye wot well with yourself will I not strive; but thereas ye say I have slain your good knights, I wot well I have done so, and that me sore repenteth; but I was enforced to do battle with them in saving of my life, or else I must suffered them to have slain me. And as for my lady, Queen Guenever, except your person of your highness, and my lord Sir Gawaine, there is no knight under heaven that dare make it good upon me, that ever I was a traitor unto your person. And where it please you to say that I have holden my lady your queen many winters, unto that I shall ever make a large answer, and prove it upon any knight that beareth the life, except your person, and Sir Gawaine, that my lady, Queen Guenever, is a true lady unto your person as any is living unto her lord, and that will I make good with my hands. Howbeit it hath liked her good grace to have me in chierté, and to cherish me more than any other knight; and unto my power I again have deserved her love, for ofttimes, my lord, ye have consented that she should be brent and destroyed, in your heat, and then it fortuned me to do battle for her, and ere I departed from her adversary they confessed their untruth, and she

full worshipfully excused. And at such times, my lord Arthur, ye loved me, and thanked me when I saved your queen from the fire; and then ye promised me for ever to be my good lord; and now methinketh ye reward me full ill for my good service. And my good lord meseemeth I had lost a great part of my worship an I had suffered my lady your queen, to have been brent, and insomuch she should have been brent for my sake. For sithen I have done battles for your queen in other quarrels than in mine own, meseemeth now I had more right to do battle for her in right quarrel. And therefore my good and gracious lord, said Sir Launcelot, take your queen unto your good grace, for she is both fair, true, and good.

Fie on thee, false recreant knight, said Sir Gawaine; I let thee wit my lord, King Arthur, shall have his queen and thee, maugre thy visage, and slay you both whether it please him. It may well be, said Sir Launcelot, but wit you well my lord, Sir Gawaine, an me list to come out of this castle ye should win me and the queen more harder than ever ye won a strong battle. Fie on thy proud words, said Sir Gawaine; as for my lady, the queen, I will never say of her shame. But thou, false and recreant knight, what cause hadst thou to slay my good brother Sir Gareth, that loved thee more than all my kin? Alas, thou madest him knight thine own hands; why slew thou him that loved thee so well? For to excuse me, said Sir Launcelot, it helpeth me not, but by the faith that I owe to the high order of knighthood, I should with as good will have slain my nephew, Sir Bors de Ganis, at that time. But alas that

ever I was so unhappy that I had not seen Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris.

Thou liest, recreant knight, said Sir Gawaine, thou slewest him in despite of me; and therefore wit thou well I shall make war to thee, and all the while that I may live. And then Sir Gawaine made many men to blow upon Sir Launcelot; and all at once they called him false recreant knight.

Then when Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Ector de Maris, and Sir Lionel heard this outcry, all they went unto Sir Launcelot, and said thus: My lord, Sir Launcelot, wit ye well we have great scorn of the great rebukes that we hear Gawaine say to you: wherefore we pray you, as ye will have our service, keep us no longer within these walls, for ye fare as a man that were afeard, and for all your fair speech it will not avail you. For wit you well, Sir Gawaine will not suffer you to be accorded with King Arthur, and therefore fight for your life and your right, an ye dare.

Then either party made them ready on the morn for to do battle, and Sir Gawaine let purvey many knights for to wait upon Sir Launcelot, for to overset him and to slay him. And on the morn at underne Sir Arthur was ready in the field with three great hosts. And then Sir Launcelot's fellowship came out at three gates; and Sir Lionel came in the foremost battle, and Sir Launcelot came in the middle, and Sir Bors came out at the third gate. Thus they came in order and rule, as full noble knights; and always Sir Launcelot charged all his knights to save King Arthur and Sir Gawaine.

Then there began a great stour, and much people was slain, and ever King Arthur was nigh about Sir Launcelot to have slain him, and Sir Launcelot suffered him, and would not strike again. So Sir Bors encountered with King Arthur, and there with a spear Sir Bors smote him down; and so he alighted and drew his sword, and said to Sir Launcelot: Shall I make an end of this war? and that he meant to have slain King Arthur. Not so hardy, said Sir Launcelot, upon pain of thy head that thou touch him no more, for I will never see that most noble king that made me knight neither slain ne shamed. And therewithal Sir Launcelot alighted and took up the king and horsed him again, and said thus. My Lord Arthur, for God's love stint this strife, for ye get here no worship, an I would do mine utterance; but always I forbear you, and ye nor none of yours forbeareth me. My lord, remember what I have done in many places, and now I am evil rewarded.

Then when King Arthur was on horseback, he looked upon Sir Launcelot, and then the tears brast out of his eyen, thinking on the great courtesy that was in Sir Launcelot more than in any other man; and therewith the king rode his way, and might no longer behold him, and said: Alas, that ever this war began. And then either party withdrew them to repose them, and buried the dead. And on the morn by underne they made them ready to do battle. And then Sir Bors led the forward.

So upon the morn came Sir Gawaine as brim as any boar, with a great spear in his hand. And when

Sir Bors saw him he dressed him against him. And so they, that knew either other, feutred their spears, and with all their mights of their horses and themselves, they met together so felonously that either bare other through, and so they fell both to the earth; and then the battles joined, and there was much slaughter on both parties.

So when Sir Gawaine was hurt, they on King Arthur's party were not so orgulous as they were toforehand to do battle. Of this war was noised through all Christendom, and at last it was noised afore the Pope; and he considering the great goodness of King Arthur, and of Sir Launcelot, that was called the most noblest knights of the world, wherefore the Pope called unto him a noble clerk that at that time was there present—the French book saith, it was the Bishop of Rochester—and the Pope gave him bulls under lead unto King Arthur of England, charging him upon pain of interdicting of all England, that he take his queen Dame Guenever unto him again, and accord with Sir Launcelot.

So when this Bishop was come to Carlisle he shewed the king these bulls. And full fain would the king have been accorded with Sir Launcelot, but Sir Gawaine would not suffer him; but as for to have the queen, thereto he agreed. And then the Bishop had of the king his great seal, and his assurance as he was a true anointed king that Sir Launcelot should come safe and go safe, and that the queen should not be spoken unto of the king, nor of none other, for no thing done afore time past; and of all these appointments the Bishop

brought with him sure assurance and writing, to shew Sir Launcelot.

So when the Bishop was come to Joyous Gard, there he shewed Sir Launcelot how the Pope had written to Arthur and unto him, and there he told him the perils if he withheld the queen from the king. It was never in my thought, said Launcelot, to withold the queen from my lord Arthur; but, insomuch she should have been dead for my sake, meseemeth it was my part to save her life, and put her from that danger, till better recover might come. And now I thank God, that the Pope hath made her peace; for God knoweth I will be a thousandfold more gladder to bring her again, than ever I was of her taking away; with this, I may be sure to come safe and go safe, and that the queen shall have her liberty as she had before; and never for no thing that hath been surmised afore this time, she never from this day stand in no peril.

Then Sir Launcelot perveyed him an hundred knights, and all were clothed in green velvet, and their horses trapped to their heels; and every knight held a branch of olive in his hand, in tokening of peace. And the queen had four and twenty gentlewomen following her in the same wise. And she and Sir Launcelot were clothed in white cloth of gold tissue; and right so as ye have heard, as the French book maketh mention, he rode with the queen from Joyous Gard to Carlisle. And so they rode throughout Carlisle, and so in the castle, that all men might behold; and wit you well there was many a weeping eye. And then Sir Launcelot himself alighted, and took the queen, and so led her

where King Arthur was in his seat, and Sir Gawaine sat afore him and many great lords. So when Sir Launcelot saw the king, then he led the queen by the hand, and then he kneeled down, and the queen both. Wit you well, then was there many bold knights there with King Arthur that wept as tenderly as though they had seen all their kin afore them. So the king sat still, and said no word. And when Sir Launcelot saw his countenance, he arose and took up the queen with him, and thus he spake full knightly.

My most redoubted king, ye shall understand, by the Pope's commandment and yours, I have brought to you my lady the queen, as right requires; and if there be any knight, except your person, that will say, or dare say, but that she is true and clean to you, I here myself, Sir Launcelot du Lake, will make it good upon his body, that she is a true lady unto you; but liars ye have listened, and that hath caused debate betwixt you and me. For they that told you those tales were liars, and so it fell upon them; for by likelihood had not the might of God been with me, I might never have endured fourteen knights, and they armed and afore purposed, and I unarmed and not purposed. And as Jesu be my help, said Sir Launcelot. I slew never Sir Gareth nor Sir Gaheris by my will; but alas that ever they were unarmed that unhappy day. But this much I shall offer me, if it please the king's good grace, and you Sir Gawaine, I shall first begin at Sandwich, and there I shall go in my shirt barefoot; and at every ten miles' end I will found an house of religion, of what order ye will assign me, with an whole convent to sing

and read day and night, in especial for Sir Gareth's sake and Sir Gaheris. And this I shall perform from Sandwich unto Carlisle; and every house shall have sufficient livelihood while I have any livelihood in Christendom. And this Sir Gawaine, methinketh were more fairer, holier, and more better to their souls, than ye, my most noble king, and you, Sir Gawaine, to war upon me, for thereby shall ye get none avail.

Then all knights and ladies that were there wept as they were mad, and the tears fell on King Arthur's cheeks. Sir Launcelot, said Sir Gawaine, I have right well heard thy great proffers, but wit thou well, let the king do as it pleaseth him, I will never forgive my brothers' death, and in especial the death of my brother, Sir Gareth. And if mine uncle, King Arthur, will accord with thee, he shall lose my service; for wit thou well thou art both false to the king and to me. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, he beareth not the life that may make that good; and if ye, Sir Gawaine will charge me with so high a thing, ye must pardon me, for then needs must I answer you. Nay, said Sir Gawaine, we are past that at this time, and that caused the Pope, for he hath charged mine uncle, the king, that he shall take his queen again, and to accord with thee, Sir Launcelot, as for this season, and therefore thou shalt go safe as thou camest. But in this land thou shalt not abide past fifteen days, such summons I give thee: so the king and we were consented and accorded ere thou camest. And else, wit thou well thou shouldest not have come here, but if it were maugre thy head.

Then Sir Launcelot sighed, and therewith the tears fell on his cheeks, and then he said thus: Alas, most noble Christian realm, whom I have loved above all other realms, and in thee I have gotten a great part of my worship, and now I shall depart in this wise. Make thou no more language, said Sir Gawaine, but deliver the queen from thee, and pike thee lightly out of this court. Well, said Sir Launcelot, an I had wist of this short coming, I would have advised me twice ere that I had come hither; for an the queen had been so dear to me as ye noise her, I durst have kept her from the fellowship of the best knights under heaven.

And then Sir Launcelot said unto Guenever, in hearing of the king and them all: Madam, now I must depart from you and this noble fellowship for ever; and sithen it is so, I beseech you pray for me, and say me well; and if ye be hard bestead by any false tongues, lightly, my lady, let send me word, and if any knight's hands may deliver you by battle, I shall deliver you. And therewithal Sir Launcelot kissed the queen, and then he said all openly: Now let see what he be in this place that dare say the queen is not true unto my lord Arthur, let see who will speak an he dare speak. And therewith he brought the queen to the king, and then Sir Launcelot took his leave and departed; and there was neither king, duke, nor earl, baron nor knight, lady nor gentlewoman, but all they wept as people out of their mind, except Sir Gawaine. And when the noble Sir Launcelot took his horse to ride out of Carlisle, there was sobbing and weeping for pure dole of his departing; and so he took his way unto Joyous Gard and then ever after he called

it the Dolorous Gard. And thus departed Sir Launcelot from the court for ever.

And so when he came to Joyous Gard he called his fellowship unto him and told them how he must depart, and asked them what they would do. Then they answered all wholly together with one voice, they would do as he would do; and to make short tale, they trussed, and paid all that would ask them; and wholly an hundred knights departed with Sir Launcelot at once, and made their avows they would never leave him for weal, or for woe.

And so they shipped at Cardiff, and sailed unto Benwick: some men call it Bayonne, and some men call it Beaume, where the wine of Beaume is.

Then King Arthur and Sir Gawaine made a great host ready, to the number of threescore thousand; and all thing was made ready for their shipping to pass over the sea and so they shipped at Cardiff. And there King Arthur made Sir Mordred ruler of all England, and also he put Queen Guenever under his governance; and because Sir Mordred was King Arthur's son, he gave him the rule of his land and of his wife; and so the king passed the sea and landed upon Sir Launcelot's lands, and there he brent and wasted, through the vengeance of Sir Gawaine, all that they might overrun.

And upon the morn early, in the dawning of the day, as Sir Launcelot's knights looked out, they saw the city of Benwick besieged round about; and fast they began to set up ladders, and then they defied them out of the town, and beat them from the walls wightly.

So thus they endured half a year, and much slaughter was of people on both parties. Then it befell upon a day, Sir Gawaine came afore the gates armed at all pieces on a noble horse, with a great spear in his hand; and then he cried with a loud voice: Where art thou now, thou false traitor, Sir Launcelot? Why hidest thou thyself within holes and walls like a coward? Look out now, thou false traitor knight, and here I shall revenge upon thy body the death of my three brethren.

Then Sir Launcelot bade saddle his strongest horse, and bade let fetch his arms, and bring all unto the gate of the tower; and then Sir Launcelot spake on high unto King Arthur, and said: My lord Arthur, and noble king that made me knight, wit ye well I am right heavy for your sake, that ye thus sue upon me; and always I forbear you, for an I would have been vengeable, I might have met you in midst of the field, and there to have made your boldest knights full tame. And now I have forborne half a year, and suffered you and Sir Gawaine to do what you would do; and now may I endure it no longer, for now must I needs defend myself, insomuch Sir Gawaine hath appealed me of treason; the which is greatly against my will that ever I should fight against any of your blood, but now I may not forsake it; I am driven thereto as a beast to bay.

Then Sir Gawaine and Sir Launcelot departed a great way asunder, and then they came together with all their horses' might, and either smote other in midst of their shields; and so their horses fell to the earth; and then they avoided their horses, and dressed their shields afore them. Then they stood together and

gave many sad strokes on divers places of their bodies, that the blood brast out on many sides. Then Sir Gawaine had a grace and gift that a holy man had given him, that every day in the year, from underne till high noon, his might increased as much as thrice his strength, and that caused Sir Gawaine to win great honour. And for his sake King Arthur made an ordinance, that all manner of battles for any quarrels that should be done afore King Arthur should begin at underne; but there were but few knights that time living that knew this advantage that Sir Gawaine had, but King Arthur all only.

Then Sir Launcelot fought with Sir Gawaine, and when Sir Launcelot felt his might evermore increase, Sir Launcelot wondered. For as the French book saith, Sir Launcelot weened, when he felt Sir Gawaine double his strength, that he had been a fiend and none earthly man; wherefore Sir Launcelot traced and traversed, and covered himself with his shield, and kept his might and his braid during three hours; and that while Sir Gawaine gave him many sad strokes, that all knights that beheld Sir Launcelot marvelled how that he might endure him; but full little understood they that travail that Sir Launcelot had for to endure him. And then when it was past noon Sir Gawaine had no more but his own might. When Sir Launcelot felt him so come down, then he stretched him up and said thus: My lord Sir Gawaine, now I feel ye have done; now I must do my part, for many great and grievous strokes I have endured you this day with great pain. Then Sir Launcelot doubled his strokes and gave Sir

Gawaine such a buffet on the helmet that he fell down on his side, and Sir Launcelot withdrew him from him. Why withdrawest thou thee? said Sir Gawaine; now turn again, false traitor, and slay me, for an thou leave me thus, when I am whole I shall do battle with thee again. I shall endure you, Sir, by God's grace, but wit thou well I will never smite a felled knight.

And then he turned him and went his way towards the city. And Sir Gawaine evermore calling him traitor knight. Thus the siege endured, and as Sir Gawaine lay sick near a month, and when he was well recovered and ready within three days to do battle again with Sir Launcelot, right so came tidings unto Arthur from England that made King Arthur and all his host to remove.

As Sir Mordred was ruler of all England, he did do make letters as though that they came from beyond the sea, and the letters specified that King Arthur was slain in battle with Sir Launcelot. Wherefore Sir Mordred made a parliament, and called the lords together, and there he made them to choose him king; and so was he crowned at Canterbury; and afterwards he drew him unto Winchester, and there he took the Queen Guenever, and said plainly that he would wed her which was his father's wife. And so he made ready for the feast, and a day prefixed that they should be wedded; wherefore Queen Guenever was passing heavy. But she spake fair, and agreed to Sir Mordred's will. Then she desired of Sir Mordred for to go to London to buy all manner of things that longed unto the wedding. And because of her fair speech he trusted her well

enough, and gave her leave to go. And so when she came to London she took the Tower of London, and in all haste possible she stuffed it with all manner of victual, and well garnished it with men, and so kept it.

Then when Sir Mordred understood how he was beguiled, he was passing wroth out of measure. And he went and laid a mighty siege about the Tower of London, and made many great assaults thereat, and shot great guns. But all might not prevail Sir Mordred; for Queen Guenever, for fair speech nor for foul, would never trust to come in his hands again.

Then came the Bishop of Canterbury, the which was a noble clerk and an holy man, and thus he said to Sir Mordred: Sir, what will ye do? will ye first displease God and sithen shame yourself, and all knighthood? Sir, leave this opinion or else I shall curse you with book and bell and candle. Do thou thy worst, said Sir Mordred, wit thou well I shall defy thee. So the Bishop departed and did the cursing in the most orgulist wise that might be done. And then Sir Mordred sought the Bishop of Canterbury, for to have slain him. Then the Bishop fled unto Glastonbury; and there he was as priest hermit in a chapel, and lived in poverty and in holy prayers, for well he understood that mischievous war was at hand.

Then came word to Sir Mordred that King Arthur had araised the siege for Sir Launcelot, and he was coming homeward with a great host, to be avenged upon Sir Mordred. And so Sir Mordred drew with a great host to Dover, for there he heard say that Sir Arthur would arrive.

And so as Sir Mordred was at Dover with his host, there came King Arthur with a great navy of ships. And there was Sir Mordred ready awaiting upon his landing, to let his own father to land upon the land that he was king over. Then there was much slaughter of gentle knights, and many a full bold baron was laid full low, on both parties. But King Arthur was so courageous that there might no manner of knight let him to land, and his knights fiercely followed him; and so they landed maugre Sir Mordred and all his power, and put Sir Mordred aback, that he fled and all his people.

So when this battle was done, King Arthur let bury his people that were dead. And then was noble Sir Gawaine found in a great boat, lying more than half dead. And there the king made sorrow out of measure, and took Sir Gawaine in his arms and said: Alas, Sir Gawaine, my sister's son, here now thou liest, the man in the world that I loved most; and now is my joy gone, for in Sir Launcelot and you I most had my joy, and now have I lost my joy of you both; wherefore all mine earthly joy is gone from me. Mine uncle King Arthur, said Sir Gawaine, wit you well my death-day is come, and all is through mine own hastiness and wilfulness; for had Sir Launcelot been with you as he was, this unhappy war had never begun; and of all this am I causer. But alas, I would not accord with him, and therefore I pray you, fair uncle, that I may have paper, pen, and ink, that I may write to Sir Launcelot with mine own hands.

And then Sir Gawaine was set up weakly; and then he wrote thus, as the French book maketh mention:

Unto Sir Launcelot du Lake, flower of all noble knights, I, Sir Gawaine, King Lot's son of Orkney, sister's son unto the noble King Arthur, send thee greeting, and let thee have knowledge that the tenth day of May I was smitten upon the old wound thou gavest me afore the city of Benwick, and through that same wound I am come to my death-day. And I will that all the world wit, that I sought my death, and not through thy desiring; wherefore I beseech thee, most famous knight of the world, return again unto this realm, and see my tomb, and pray some prayer more or less for my soul. Also, Sir Launcelot, for all the love that ever was betwixt us, make no tarrying, but come over the sea in all haste, that thou mayst with thy noble knights rescue that noble king that made thee knight; for he is full straitly beset with a false traitor, Sir Mordred, that is my half brother. And this letter was written but two hours afore my death, written with mine own hand and so subscribed with part of my heart's blood.

And so at the hour of noon Sir Gawaine yielded up the spirit; and then the king let inter him in a chapel within Dover Castle; and there yet all men may see the skull of him, and the same wound is seen that Sir Launcelot gave him in battle.

Now speak of we Sir Launcelot du Lake and how he heard in his country that Sir Mordred was crowned king in England, and made war against King Arthur, his own father, and would let him to land in his own land; then was Sir Launcelot wroth out of measure and said to his kinsmen: Alas, that double traitor Sir Mordred, now me repenteth that ever he escaped

my hands; for I feel by the doleful letter that my lord Sir Gawaine sent me, on whose soul Jesu have mercy, that my lord Arthur is full hard bestead.

Then they made them ready in all haste, and so Sir Launcelot passed over the sea till he came to Dover, and there he landed with seven kings, and the number was hideous to behold. Then Sir Launcelot enquired of men of Dover where was King Arthur become. Then the people told him how that he was slain, and Sir Mordred and a hundred thousand died on a day; and how Sir Mordred gave King Arthur there the first battle at his landing, and there was good Sir Gawaine slain, and how Sir Mordred fought with the king upon a down beside Salisbury, and there they were both slain and a hundred thousand. Alas, said Sir Launcelot, this is the heaviest tidings that ever came to me. And now, fair sirs, shew me the tomb of Sir Gawaine. And then certain people of the town brought him into the castle of Dover, and shew him the tomb. Then Sir Launcelot kneeled down and wept, and prayed heartily for his soul. And on the morn all the priests and clerks that might be gotten in the country were there, and sang Mass of Requiem; and there offered first Sir Launcelot, and he offered an hundred pound; and then the seven kings offered forty pound apiece; and also there was a thousand knights, and each of them offered a pound; and the offering dured from morn till night, and Sir Launcelot lay two nights on his tomb in prayers and weeping.

Then on the third day Sir Launcelot called his fellowship, and said thus: My fair lords, I thank you

all of your coming into this country with me, but we came too late, and that shall repent me while I live, but against death may no man rebel. But sithen it is so, said Sir Launcelot, I will myself ride and seek my lady, Queen Guenever, for as I hear say she hath had great pain and much disease; and I hear say that she is fled into the west. Therefore ye all shall abide me here, and but if I come again within fifteen days, then take your ships, and depart into your country, for I will do as I say to you.

So he departed and rode westerly, and there he sought a seven or eight days; and at the last he came to a nunnery at Almesbury where Queen Guenever was; and there she let make herself a nun, and ware white clothes and black, and great penance she took, as ever did sinful lady in this land, and never creature could make her merry; but lived in fasting, prayers, and alms-deeds, that all manner of people marvelled how virtuously she was changed.

And then was Queen Guenever ware of Sir Launcelot as he walked in the cloister. And when she saw him she swooned thrice. So when she might speak, she called ladies and gentlewomen to her, and said: Ye marvel, fair ladies why I make this fare. Truly, it is for the sight of yonder knight that yonder standeth; wherefore I pray you all call him to me.

When Sir Launcelot was brought to her, then she said to all the ladies: Through this man and me hath all this war been wrought, and the death of the most noblest knights of the world; for through our love that we have loved together is my most noble lord slain.

Therefore, Sir Launcelot, wit thou well I am set in such a plight to get my soul-heal; and yet I trust through God's grace after my death to have a sight of the blessed face of Christ, and at domesday to sit on his right side, for as sinful as ever I was are saints in heaven. Therefore, Sir Launcelot, I require thee and beseech thee heartily, for all the love that ever was betwixt us, that thou never see me more in the visage; for as well as I have loved thee, mine heart will not serve me to see thee, for through thee and me is the flower of kings and knights destroyed; therefore Sir Launcelot, go to thy realm, and there take thee a wife, and live with her with joy and bliss; and I pray thee heartily, pray for me to our Lord that I may amend my misliving. Now, sweet madam, said Sir Launcelot, would ye that I should now return again unto my country, there to wed a lady? Nay, madam, wit you well that shall I never do, for I shall never be so false to you of that I have promised; but the same destiny that ye have taken you to, I will take me unto, for to please Jesu, and ever for you I cast me specially to pray. For sithen ye have taken you to perfection, I must needs take me to perfection of right. For I take record of God, in you I have had mine earthly joy; and if I had found you now so disposed, I had cast me to have had you into mine own realm.

But sithen I find you thus disposed, I ensure you faithfully, I will ever take me to penance, and pray while my life lasteth, if I may find any hermit, either gray or white, that will receive me. Wherefore, madam, I pray you kiss me and never no more. Nay, said the

queen, that shall I never do, but abstain you from such works. And they departed. But there was never so hard an hearted man but he would have wept to see the dolour that they made; for there was lamentations as they had been stung with spears; and many times they swooned, and the ladies bare the queen to her chamber.

And Sir Launcelot awoke, and went and took his horse, and rode all that day and all night in a forest, weeping. And at the last he was ware of an hermitage and a chapel stood betwixt two cliffs; and then he heard a little bell ring to mass; and then he alighted, and tied his horse to the gate, and heard mass. And he that sang mass was the Bishop of Canterbury and with him was Sir Bedivere, last left alive of all King Arthur's noble knights. Both the Bishop and Sir Bedivere knew Sir Launcelot, and they spake together after mass. Then Sir Bedivere told his tale all whole of the battle, and how Sir Mordred was slain by King Arthur, and by him Arthur was hurt to the death.

Thus of Arthur I find never more written in books that be authorized, nor more of the very certainty of his death heard I never read, but thus was he led away in a ship wherein were three queens; that one was King Arthur's sister, Queen Morgan le Fay; the other was the Queen of Northgalis, the third was the Queen of the West Lands. Also there was Nimue, the chief lady of the lake, that had done much for King Arthur. More of the death of King Arthur could I never find, but that ladies brought him to his burials in the chapel of the hermitage near Glastonbury; and such one

was buried there, that the hermit bare witness that sometime was Bishop of Canterbury, but yet the hermit knew not in certain that he was verily the body of King Arthur: for this tale Sir Bedivere, knight of the Round Table, made it to be written.

Yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall come again, and he shall win the holy cross. I will not say it shall be so, but rather will I say: here in this world he changed his life. But many men say that there is written upon his tomb this verse: Hic jacet Arthurus, Rex quondam, Rerque futurus.

And when Sir Bedivere had told his tale all whole, Sir Launcelot's heart almost brast for sorrow, and he threw his arms abroad, and said: Alas, who may trust this world! And then he kneeled down, and prayed the Bishop to shrive him and assoil him. And then he besought the Bishop that he might be his brother. Then the Bishop said: I will gladly; and there he put an habit upon Sir Launcelot, and there he served God day and night with prayers and fasting.

Thus the great host abode at Dover fifteen days. Then Sir Bors de Ganis made the great host for to go home again; and Sir Bors, with more of Sir Launcelot's kin, took on them to ride all England overthwart and endlong, to seek Sir Launcelot. So Sir Bors by fortune rode so long till he came to the same chapel where Sir Launcelot was; and so Sir Bors heard a little bell knell, that rang to mass; and there he alighted and heard mass. And when mass was done, the Bishop,

Sir Launcelot, and Sir Bedivere came to Sir Bors. And when Sir Bors saw Sir Launcelot in that manner clothing, then he prayed the Bishop that he might be in the same suit. And within half a year, there was come Sir Galihud, Sir Galihodin, Sir Blamore, Sir Bleoberis, Sir Villiars, Sir Clarras, and Sir Gahalantine. So all these seven noble knights there abode still. And when they saw Sir Launcelot had taken him to such perfection, they had no lust to depart, but took such habit as he had. For when they saw him endure such penance, they took no force what pain they endured, for to see the noblest knight of the world take such abstinence that he waxed full lean.

Thus they endured in great penance six year; and then Sir Launcelot took the habit of priesthood of the Bishop, and a twelve month he sang mass.

And thus upon a night, there came a vision to Sir Launcelot, and charged him, in remission of his sins, to haste him unto Almesbury: And by then thou come there, thou shalt find Queen Guenever dead. And therefore take they fellows with thee, and purvey them of a horse bier, and fetch thou the corpse of her, and bury her by her husband, the noble King Arthur. So this avision came to Sir Launcelot thrice in one night.

Then Sir Launcelot rose up or day, and told the hermit. It were well done, said the hermit, that ye disobey not the avision. Then Sir Launcelot took his eight fellows with him, and on foot they yede from Glastonbury to Almesbury, the which is little more than thirty mile. And thither they came within two days, for they were weak and feeble to go. And when

Sir Launcelot was come to Almesbury within the nunnery, Queen Guenever died but half an hour afore. And the ladies told Sir Launcelot that Queen Guenever told them all or she passed, that Sir Launcelot had been a priest near a twelvemonth, and hither he cometh as fast as he may to fetch my corpse; and beside my lord, King Arthur, he shall bury me. Wherefore the queen said in hearing of them all, I beseech Almighty God that I may never have power to see Sir Launcelot with my worldly eyen: and thus, said all the ladies, was ever her prayer these two days, till she was dead. Then Sir Launcelot saw her visage, but he wept not greatly, but sighed. And so he did all the observances of the service himself, both the dirge, and on the morn he sang mass. And there was ordained an horse bier, with an hundred torches ever brenning about the corpse of the queen, and ever Sir Launcelot with his eight fellows went about the horse bier, singing and reading many an holy orison, and frankincense about the corpse incensed. Thus Sir Launcelot and his eight fellows went on foot from Almesbury unto Glastonbury.

And when they were come to the chapel and the hermitage, there she had a dirge with great devotion. And on the morn the hermit that sometime was Bishop of Canterbury sang the mass of Requiem. And Sir Launcelot was the first that offered, and then also his eight fellows. And then she was wrapped in cered cloth of Raines, from the top to the toe in thirty fold; and after she was put in a web of lead, and then in a coffin of marble. And when she was put in the earth Sir Launcelot swooned, and lay long still, while the hermit

came and awaked him, and said: Ye be to blame, for ye displease God with such manner of sorrow-making. Truly, said Sir Launcelot, I trust I do not displease God, for He knoweth mine intent. For my sorrow was not, nor is not, for any rejoicing of sin, but my sorrow may never have end. For when I remember of her beauty and her noblesse, that was both with her king and with her, so when I saw his corpse and her corpse so lie together, truly mine heart would not serve to sustain my careful body. Also when I remember me how by my default, mine orgule, and my pride, that they were both laid full low, that were peerless that ever was living of Christian people, wit you well, said Sir Launcelot, this remembered, of their kindness and mine unkindness, sank so to mine heart, that I might not sustain myself.

Then Sir Launcelot never after ate but little meat, ne drank, till he was dead. For then he sickened more and more, and dwined away. For evermore, day and night, he prayed, but sometimes he slumbered a broken sleep; ever he was lying grovelling on the tomb of King Arthur and Queen Guenever. So within six weeks after, Sir Launcelot fell sick, and lay in his bed, and then he sent for the Bishop that there was hermit, and all his true fellows, and said: Sir Bishop, I pray you give to me all my rights that longeth to a Christian man. It shall not need you, said the hermit and all his fellows, it is but heaviness of your blood, ye shall be well mended by the grace of God to-morn. My fair lords, said Sir Launcelot, wit ye well my careful body will into the earth, I have warning more than now I

will say; therefore give my rights. So when he was houseled and anealed, he prayed the Bishop that his fellows might bear his body to Joyous Gard. Some men say it was Alnwick, and some men say Bamborough. For I made mine avow sometime, that in Joyous Gard I would be buried. And because of breaking of mine avow, I pray you all lead me thither. Then there was weeping and wringing of hands among his fellows.

So at a season of the night they all went to their beds. And so after midnight, against day, the Bishop that then was hermit, as he lay in his bed asleep, he fell upon a great laughter. And therewith all the fellowship awoke, and came to the Bishop, and asked him what he ailed. Ah Jesu mercy, said the Bishop, why did ye awake me? I was never in all my life so merry and so well at ease. Wherefore? said Sir Bors. Truly, said the Bishop, here was Sir Launcelot with me with more angels than ever I saw men in one day. And I saw the angels heave up Sir Launcelot unto heaven, and the gates of heaven opened against him. It is but dretching of dreams, said Sir Bors, for I doubt not Sir Launcelot aileth nothing but good. It may well be, said the Bishop; go ye to his bed, and then shall ye prove the sooth. So when Sir Bors and his fellows came to his bed they found him stark dead, and the sweetest savour about him that ever they felt, and he lay as he had smiled.

Then was there weeping and wringing of hands, and the greatest dole that ever men made. And so they came with him unto Joyous Gard, and there they laid him in the body of the quire. Thus they kept the body of

Sir Launcelot fifteen days, and then they buried it with great devotion. Then Sir Bors, Sir Blamore, and Sir Bleoberis went unto the Holy Land. For the book saith, so Sir Launcelot commanded them or ever he passed out of this world. And these knights did many battles on the miscreants or Turks. And there they died upon a Good Friday for God's sake.

And here is the end of the death of Launcelot & Guenever who while they lived were true lovers and so~made a good end.
For the preservation of their love story we are indebted to many romancers known & unknown but in especial to Sir Thomas Malory, Kt. himself the last of the romancers.

GLOSSARY

Abate, depress, calm
Abought, paid for
Accompted, counted
Accorded, agreed
Allow, approve
Anealed, anointed
Anon, at once
Araged, enraged, confused
Assoil, absolve
Assotted or Sotted, infatuated
Astonied, amazed, stunned
At-after, after
Avised, take thought
Avision, vision
Avoided, got clear of
Avow, vow
Awayward, away

Barget, little ship
Battle, division of an army
Bawdy, dirty
Beclosed, enclosed
Become, befallen, gone to
Behest, promise
Behight, promised
Beholden, obliged to
Beseen, appointed, arrayed
Beskift, shove off
Betaken, entrusted
Betid, happened
Board, deck
Boot, remedy
Bouder, jester
Braced, embraced
Brachet, a little hound
Brast, burst
Brim, fierce
Broaches, spits

Cast, propose
Cere, wax over, embalm
Certes, certainly
Chafe, heat, decompose
Cheer, countenance, entertainment
Chierté, dearness
Cleped, called
Complished, complete
Courage, encourage
Croup, crupper
Curteist, most courteous

Daffish, foolish
Danger (in), under obligations to, in the power of
Dawed, revived
Deadly, mortal, human
Default, fault
Defend, forbid
Departition, departure
Did off, took off
Discover, reveal
Dispoiled, stripped
Disworship, shame
Dole, sorrow
Don, gift
Doted, foolish
Dress, make ready
Dressed up, raised
Dretching, being troubled in sleep

Eased, entertained
Enchafe, heat
Enchieve, achieve
Endlong, along side of
Engine, device
Enow, enough
Errant, wandering
Estates, ranks
Everych, each, every one

Faute, lack
Feuter, set in rest
Flang, flung, rushed
Fleet, float
Foiled, defeated, shamed
Foined, thrust
For-bled, spent with bleeding
Force (no), no concern
Fordo, destroy
Forthinketh, repents

Gerfalcon, a fine hawk
Germane, closely allied
Grovelling, on his face
Guerdonless, without reward
Guise, fashion

Hale and How, a sailor's cry
Halp, helped
Harness, armour
Hauberk, coat of mail
Haut, noble
Heavy, sad
Hete, command
High (on), aloud
Hight, called
Hilled, covered
Holden, held
Houselled, to be given the Eucharist
Hoved, waited about
Hurtle, dash

Ind, dark blue
In like, alike

Japes, jests
Jesseraunt, a short cuirass

Know, acknowledge

Lain, conceal
Largess, liberality
Laund, waste plain
Let, caused to, hinder
Lief, dear
Lieve, believe
List, desire
Loving, praising
Lusk, lubber
Lusts, inclinations

Makeless, matchless
Mal engine, evil design
Marches, borders
Mass-penny, offering at mass for the dead
Maugre, despite
Measle, disease
Medled, mingled
Mickle, much
Mischieved, hurt
Miscreature, unbeliever
Missay, revile
Mo, more
More and less, rich and poor
Much, great

Naked, unarmed
Ne, nor

Nill, will not
Nis, is not
Noblesse, nobleness
Noised, reported
Nold, would not

Orgule, haughtiness
Outcept, except
Outher, or
Out-taken, except
Overthwart and endlong, by the breadth and length

Paitrelles, breastplate of a horse
Paynim, pagan
Pight, pitched
Pike, steal away
Plenour, complete
Pont, bridge
Port, gate
Press, throng
Pricking, spurring
Prime, 6.0 a.m.
Puissance, power
Purvey, provide

Quit, repaid

Raines, a town in Brittany famous for its cloth
Range, station
Rased, tore, rushed
Report, refer
Rightwise, rightly
Rivage, shore

Sacring, consecrating
Samite, silk stuff with gold or silver threads
Saw, proverb
Scripture, writing
Search, probe wounds
Semblant, semblance
Sendal, fine cloth
Sennight, week
Shend, harm
Shent, undone, disgraced
Siege, seat
Siker, sure
Sith, since
Sithen, afterwards, since
Spered, asked
Sperhawk, sparrowhawk
Stert, rose up quickly
Stint, fixed revenue
Stonied, became confused
Stour, battle
Surcingles, saddle girths

Thrang, pushed
To-brast, burst
To-fore, before
To-morn, to-morrow
Took, gave
To-rove, broke up
Traverse, slantwise
Trussed, packed

Umbre, shade
Underne, 9–12 a.m.
Unhappy, unlucky
Unhilled, uncovered
Unnethe, scarcely
Unwimple, uncover
Utterance, uttermost

Varet, servant
Venery, hunting
Villain, man of low birth

WALLOP, gallop
WARN, forbid, refuse
WELTERED, rolled about
WIELD, possess, have power over
WIGHT, brave
WILDSOME, desolate
WITE, blame
WITTING, knowledge
WOLD OR NOLD, would or would not
WOOD, mad
WORSHIP, honour
WOT, know
WRACK, destruction

YEDE, ran

Printed by Jarrold & Sons Ltd. Norwich

University of St. Francis
GEN 398.2 A378
Malory
Women of the Morte Darthur
3 0301 00018852 0